digit FastTrack

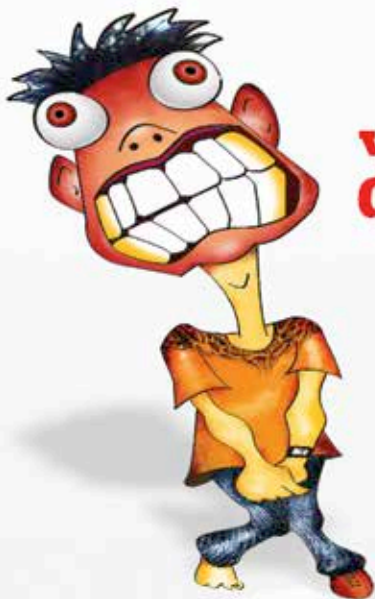### YOUR HANDY GUIDE TO EVERYDAY TECHNOLOGY

To SEO

- What is Search Engine Optimisation
- Why you need SEO
- Basics of SEO - Existing Website Tweaks
- Advanced SEO Tips
- Choosing an SEO friendly CMS
- SEO Hacks & Plugins
- Mobile SEO
- Video SEO
- Social Media SEO
- SEO for Google, Yahoo, Bing
- Of Pigeon, Panda, Penguin and Hummingbird
- SEO Myths and Facts

FAST TRACK to
SEO

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CHAPTERS

server

COVER DESIGN: PETERSON P

The Internet is huge and it's getting bigger

Y ou cannot imagine the amount of information on the internet. This is not a statement of exaggeration, nor is it artistic licence taken for literary purposes of shock and surprise. It is quite literally, humanly impossible to actually visualise numbers as big as the amount of information on the internet because we suffer from a cognitive bias called scope insensitivity. While it's easy to rattle off stats about the internet -- in particular, ones that involve absurdly huge, imaginary books it would fill, or the horrific number of imaginary trees those imaginary books would need -- it's far more mind-boggling to get realistic idea of the numbers in context.

There are over a billion websites on the internet, the mark having been reached in 2014. Sure, simple, right? Wrong. Your own single personal computer most likely has several gigabytes of information on it. That's several million kilobytes of information -- several million plain text files, say. Now imagine the number of personal computers in the world. Add the number of personal devices like smartphones and smartwatches. Add the number of commercial computers that keep our trains running, our power systems backed up, our ships and planes on course all day every day. Add the number of household devices connected to the Internet of Things. Add metadata that keeps track of all of these devices.

Are you growing uneasy yet?

Now imagine having to search through each and every single one of those text files, remembering what each of them contains, making difficult and

complex decisions about which files are best related to any given one, and when someone asks you about the average expected lifespan of the Arctic Fox, you not only need to give them the right answer, you need to do it in tiny fractions of a second so that people don't lose interest in you.

Welcome to the life of a search engine. It reads everything, organises it all, then makes split second decisions to bring you the most relevant answer to your queries.

Here's the interesting part. Search Engine Optimisation is a field that talks about how to make your website more visible in a search engine's results. Yes, it's possible, and no, it's not illegal -- as long as you do it correctly. SEO talks about how to understand what search engines do, and how to make their work easier for them so that when people ask them about blue suede shoes, your shoe company that specialises in blue coloured suede shoes comes up at high as possible. SEO talks about how to publicise your website to a veritable army of robots that are crawling the internet all day, every day, to search for things people may want, and in particular, how to do it without being a bad guy.

Are you in here somewhere?

Make sure your website doesn't get lost in the crowd. Get your site optimized for search engines.

WHAT IS SEO?

Swimming in a sea, hoping to be found. There are floaters like you for miles around. If you want to be seen by the eye in the sky, into this FastTrack you must pry!

As of the first quarter of 2016, Facebook has surpassed 1.6 billion users. That's more than 1.6 billion dynamically generated pages on one website alone. Now compound this to the fact that the number of websites crossed 1 billion way back in 2014. It doesn't take a genius to see that the internet is the second largest thing we know of, after the universe.

On occasion, it so happens that you want some information from that collection of things. On more often occasion, you don't know exactly what you want yourself. Of course, you might say, this is obvious, since no one can know everything and moreover, things change. Nowadays it's not even a problem. Everyone knows what to do when you need to find what you don't know you want... you Google it! (Colloquially speaking.) You put in any term related to what you want to find and you are served relevant results on a platter. The relevance is especially important, it is the crux of the usability and utility of search engines. In fact, it is only because search results are so good, that this joke works:

Q - Where is the best place to hide a dead body?
A - On the second page of Google search results.

So now the question becomes, how do these search engines find what you're looking for with such accuracy? Search engines essentially index the haystack to find the needle, but of course it's slightly more complicated than that. Shortly, we will see in more detail.

You want to be the needle that's found in the haystack of the internet? To be more realistic, you want to be the needle that's found in the needlestack of internet size? Isn't it too much to ask? Fortunately, there's a pseudo-magic pill for your website to take. You guessed it! The answer is SEO, search engine optimization!

The VVWWorld Wide Web

So here's the field - the collection of all that is contained within what is commonly called 'the internet'. Indeed, it is very vastly wide, though that's not the same as what the 'wide' in www implies. That's the Very Vastly Wide World Wide Web.

To a layman, or an engineer, the internet is simply a network of networks of networks of.. ..of computers. Computers are at the end points, be they massive farms of servers, or clients like your laptop, mobile phone or Xbox.
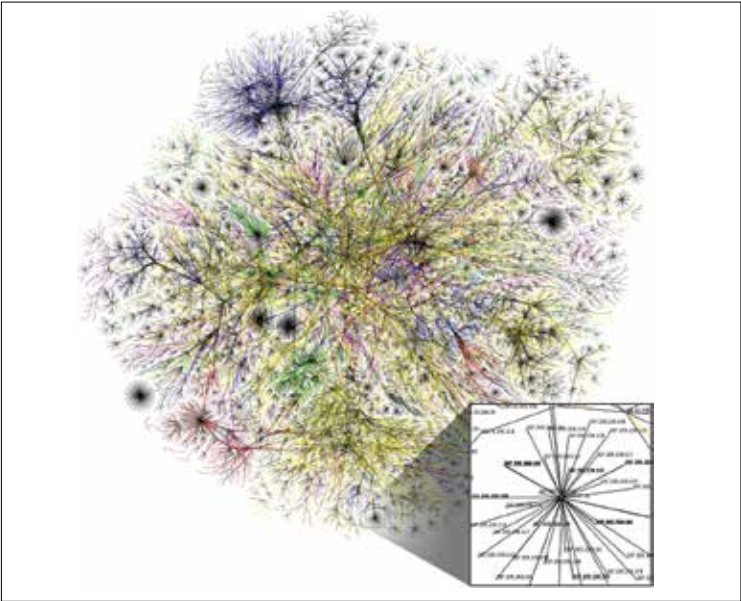
Network route structure of a small section of the internet

All the end points have an IP address, and even with IP addresses there can be many levels, corresponding to the levels of networks you just (hopefully) pictured in your head. Just as our communications have an underlying language to be meaningful, on the internet, there are protocols. Though as important as the internet, for this Fast Track, delving into protocols would be beyond the scope and beside the point.

Now, websites, web applications, or any entity that is accessible online (via the internet), are basically files sitting on a computer that has an address on the internet. To go to any website (without the help of search engines), you would need to know the address of the server where it is hosted. So you can also imagine the internet as a gigantic city with the same numbered signs outside every shop. You want the best chicken roast in town but you don't know what the shops contain, let alone which one is the best. All you can do is go visit them mechanically, one by one. Of course you could ask someone else too, but they would just be telling you what they knew, and even they couldn't know everything. What if you missed out on life because of the lack of information? The horror! Yellow pages to the rescue! Er, I mean, search engines.

Secrets of Search Engines Revealed - CIA

Remember the 'eye in the sky'? This is it. Apologies to those with jumpy minds, this isn't a classified document released by the Central Intelligence Agency. CIA stands for Crawling, Indexing and Algorithms, the three act play behind any search engine. The search engine sends out bots (a.k.a. spiders) to Crawl the web. These bots are basically scripts that go from page to page and link to link, building an Index of whatever they find. They start crawling with a list of known urls and when they come across a new link on a page, it is added to the list and crawled over later.

The Index is a massive compilation of all the words that the bot comes across, along with information like their position on the page, related attributes and tags, etc. Crawling is a continuous process, because things change really quickly on the internet, and search engines like to keep up. Now when someone uses a search engine, the part that takes the query and returns results from the Index is the Algorithm. These algorithms take into account a multitude of factors to determine the most relevant results, given a user's query. Therefore, the Algorithm is what really decides the ranking of the pages. Again, different search engines have their own proprietary algorithms and thus often return different results for the same query.

With a rhyme this chapter begun, perhaps it should end with one. Learn this, for to learn you came: Fame is the main name of the game. If you think you are the best, making it to the top of the search rankings is your test. Here's a hint for the

This spider does NOT work for Google or Bing

whole class: you don't really have to be the best to pass. There's no guarantee, but all you have to do, is read this Fast Track and not forget to follow through.

So now that you have an idea of what SEO is, why should you care? Well, that's what the next chapter is all about! Dive right in! **d**

THE REASONS WHY YOU NEED SEO

The time for hitting the nail on SEO's coffin is hardly near. SEO is alive and kicking, screaming 'Are you game?'

Y ou are definitely justified in your scepticism about using SEO for the benefit of your business. For one thing, an awful lot of people try to sell the service to you, almost too enthusiastically. And if there's one thing we all know as humans, it's that you need to be extremely weary in such circumstances.

Then, there's also the case of how many results you get when you Google 'Is SEO dead?'- more than 44 million references - more than a lifetime's worth of reading. Not that all these references proclaim RIP on SEO but the number makes it fairly evident that there seems to be a looming concern about SEO's efficacy.

And if you are someone who harbours doubts along those lines, here is where the doubts end.

1. Because it still works pretty well

With a large number of people spending an enormous amount of time online, it made great sense to do whatever you could to make your brand/product/ offers discoverable by a great many of your target audience.

Though the data contained in the internet is too voluminous, with the right SEO tactics, it's extremely feasible for you to bring your business to the attention of a large audience online. While it's a fact that data pertaining to organic traffic has been removed from Google recently, various techniques with which SEO can be improved still works well.

2. It will continue to be effective

Regardless of the change in the types of content i.e. audio and video. The search engines still operate on fundamentals such as keywords. It seems

highly unlikely that this scenario is going to change in the near future. Meaning, the SEO techniques that bring good results today will continue in that vein for a while yet.

3. Search engines getting more market share

An overwhelming 80 to 90 per cent of consumers do an online check before making a purchase. What this means for a business is that you simply cannot afford to lose all these customers – the number of whom signify, well, pretty much everyone. In the absence of organic SEO, you are indirectly allowing your potential customers to seek out other vendors in the same business.

4. Increasing mobile bandwidth/ local search optimization

The interval between the launch of 3G and 4G services by data providers was just a blink of an eye-or so it seems like. And the amount of traffic that comes via mobile devices is said to be higher than that driven to the desktop services. The combination of higher bandwidth and significant rise in the number of mobile users mean that SEO techniques like local search optimization are gaining importance.

5. If you don't have a good content profile, it could be damaging for you

Google, as well as other search engines update their search algorithms more frequently than one may imagine. And with every update, the way these search engines look at websites also change. For instance, thanks to renewed algorithms, search parameters that didn't even exist a few years back-like social media indicators are now highly important in the search metrics.

This implies that it's crucial for your ranking as well. If you don't have a good content profile which you keep regularly adding to, it may be detrimental to your business since it's one major element which Google factors in while looking at your site.

6. It doesn't dig too deep into your pocket

Cost-effectiveness is one aspect which cannot be discounted about SEO. Aside from the positive results in traffic that it brings, this is

one factor which makes SEO the darling of the digital marketer. Sure, there exist other methods of online marketing – including social media marketing, buying leads for an email marketing plan, PPC advertising etc. But the fact is that compared to such methods, SEO-which isn't expensive gives a good return on investment.

Not that the other methods don't have their place. They do-for instance, PPC could drive more revenue for you. And a good reach on social media may be significant for your brand's image. However, even so, organic SEO will play a crucial role in solidifying your online presence.

7. Your competitors do it

It's not the case that you need to replicate or mimic everything that your competition does. But in the case of SEO, it could be wise to indulge in a little 'me-too!' behaviour. Especially given the fact that SEO could be working very well for your competitors, who with its aid might be snatching valuable customers who could have been your patrons.

But it's not enough to just implement SEO for the sake of it. You must also be diligent enough to keep improving upon it,since SEO is s a continual process. It's not an install-once-forget-forever process, rather it should be viewed as something that becomes more effective with perpetual evolution. To outmanoeuvre your competitors, you have to stay ahead of their game.

You may not have to go through the mails that you frequently receive asking you to buy services of this SEO firm or the other-not all of them at any rate. But it will be wise to have a robust SEO strategy in place, and keep improving upon it as the circumstances demand. In order to get discovered online, SEO is a necessity. And as baffling as the techniques may look at times, it's still no rocket science to adapt the techniques to your purposes.

Once you do that, you are in for a fair amount of visibility, and ROI. **d**

BASICS OF SEO

SEO isn't a one time setup and there are layers of complexity to it. And what better place to start than with the basics ?

S EO is not rocket science. While it's best to hire an outside expert with prior knowledge of SEO to help get your house in order, picking up the basics of SEO and reordering your websites on your own is no big deal. Here are a few tweaks you can make to avoid running afoul of SEO guidelines.

META TAGS:

The name says it all. Very clearly, the <meta> tag contains data about a tag. The content of meta tags generally describes information about the HTML page which usually cannot be represented by any other HTML tags.

Examples of meta tags

With respect to SEO, initially, Google used the metadata of a web page in its search rankings, but earlier SEO "experts" began misusing this tool and cramming keywords unrelated to their page content into the metadata. Google eventually got wise to this and decided in the end to devalue it. These days Google doesn't use meta keywords in its ranking algorithm at all, because they're too easy to abuse. Yahoo! says, they use the Keyword Meta Tag when it ranks a page. Hence, it makes sense to add one for Yahoo! and any other minor search engines that still use it. Again, Baidu's Chinese language engine uses the keywords meta tag in its search ranking. So in the case your traffic consists of a huge chunk of Chinese language users, make sure to include this in your HTML code. A small primer to the variety of meta tag attributes is as follows:

1. Title attribute:

Title meta tags are the most important of all of the meta tags discussed here. These tags have a real impact on search rankings and, perhaps just as importantly, are the only one of the tags that are visible to the average user. When a user opens your web page, the title seen in the browser header bar is the content within your title attribute meta tag.

Where the title tag appears

2. Description attribute:

The most commonly used tag is the "description" meta tag. In case of an empty description, search engines generally generate one using the content of your website. For Google, adding the description meta tag does not result in a boost in the Search Engine Results Pages (SERPs), but the description might be used for the description for your SERP listings in Google. It's important to note that the description tag won't always show up in the results for a Google search (Google frequently picks a snippet of text from the page itself) but it's useful in other ways.

3. Meta robots attribute

With this attribute, you're telling the search engines what to do with your web pages:

index/noindex - This tells the engines whether to show your page in search results or not.

follow/nofollow - This tells the engines what to do with links on your pages: whether they should trust and "follow" your links.

URL STRUCTURE:

The URL structure of your website pages is one sure shot indicator of how optimised your website is for a search engine. One mantra you must not ignore at any cost is that hyphens used in a URL give it a whole different meaning than when underscores are used. An example would be when you google "brown leather couch". In case you'd like your page to feature on the search results, naming your URL "*http://yourdomain.com/ brown-leather-couches*" is worlds apart from naming it "*http://yourdomain. com/brown_leather_couches*". The presence of underscores would cause your URL to be indexed as "brownleathercouches", which is entirely irrelevant to what you MEANT to provide. In a similar vein, using capital letters changes the meaning of your URL, so it's generally best to avoid them. Also, make sure your URL is 100% readable by humans. If you are shown two entries:

http://yourdomain.com/brown-leather-couch
http://yourdomain.com/main.php?=956564=t65=?

It's pretty obvious you'll be more inclines to click on the first link rather than the second.

Another cardinal rule of naming URL structures is that your URL length must not exceed 2048 characters. In such a scenario, ignoring this means Internet Explorer won't be able to load the page. Moreover, your folder and hence, URL structure, should indicate the importance of your content. In case you've created a nested URL structure for more important content, it's best to change it to give more importance to the main content.

Having a search feature on your site generates dynamic and duplicate URLs to the same content, depending on the user's filtered search. Block extra dynamic URLs pointing to the canonical (statically named) URL by using a robots.txt. Also, you can help Google index your page better by telling its robots that a particular page has an alternative mobile link, in case you've created your content in such a way. In Google's words, "On the desktop page, add a special link rel="alternate" tag pointing to the corresponding mobile URL. This helps Googlebot discover the location of your site's mobile pages".

When you've made changes to a URL, remember that you are technically removing a page that has been indexed by Google. Remember to add a 301 redirect from your old URL to your new in case of such a change.

BROKEN LINKS:

As mentioned before, changing URLs can lead to missing and broken links. Seeing as how broken links stop search engine crawlers in their tracks, leading them to stop crawling that page and move on to the next one, it means any pages it hasn't crawled won't be indexed or receive a ranking. If you'd like to avoid making a mess as this and like to direct your traffic to the appropriate link, use a 301 redirect. It's best you use a broken link checker, with various such services available online, and reorder your website structure. Apart from search engines being unable to index your website, you'll also face problems with dropping traffic to your website, which will get frustrated with broken links and just avoid visiting your website from the next time onwards.
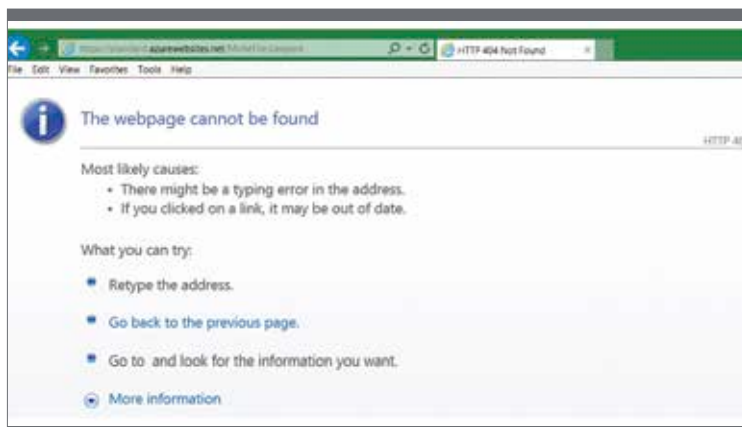
Try to avoid this

SITE STRUCTURE:

The better your site structure, the better your chance of higher ranking in the search engines. Every website has some "structure." It might be a rigorous and streamlined structure, or it may be a disorganized jumble of pages. If you are intentional and careful with your site structure, you will create a site that achieves search excellence.

Google's algorithm uses information from searchers to rank your site. If your site has poor CTRs and low dwell time, it will not perform well in the SERPs. By contrast, when a user finds a site that they like — i.e. a site with

great structure — they don't bounce and they stay longer. An accurate site structure can reduce bounce rate and improve dwell time, both of which will lead to improved rankings. One secret tool that many forget to use are sitelinks, which appear in a nested form under the site's Google search result. Seeing as how Google automatically creates sitelinks using its own algorithm, which it does only for websites with a great site structure, one
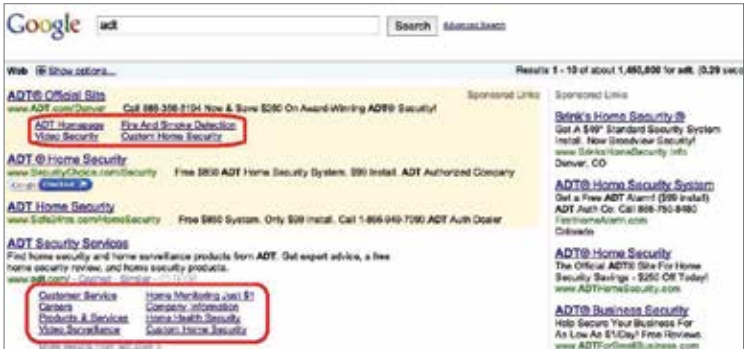
Sitelinks

can't stress enough on the importance of a good site structure. To create this kind of site structure, you'll need to:

1. Plan out a hierarchy before you develop your website.

If you're starting a website from scratch, you're in a great position to plan out site structure for the best SEO possible. The simplest hierarchy is to have the most important search ranking pages at the top, and to filter down to the less important pages. To help with a mental representation, it should look a bit like this tree:

Considering how complicating the hierarchy will make it tougher for web crawlers to index your document, it makes sense to keep the main categories between two to five, and having only relevant subcategories under the main category.

2. Create a URL structure that follows your navigation hierarchy.

The second main element in developing strong site structure is your URL structure. If you've logically thought through your hierarchy, this shouldn't be too difficult. Your URL structure follows your hierarchy.
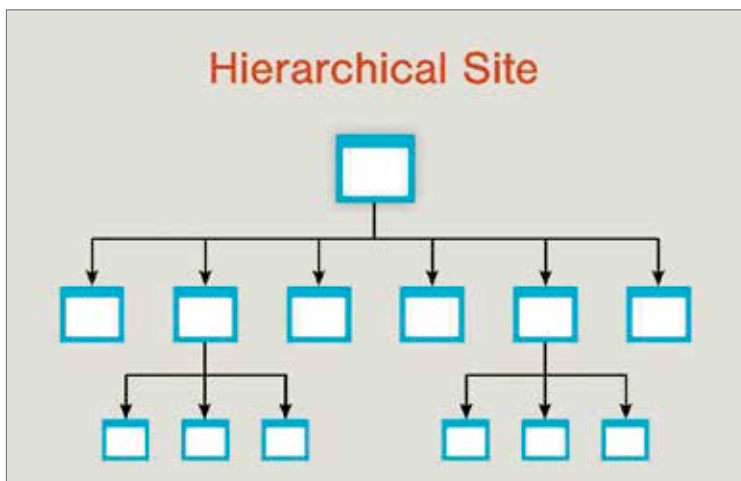
How a site hierarchy looks like

So, let's say your hierarchy for your website for a restaurant, "Kim's Restaurant", looks like this:

Main categories – "About Us", "Menu", "Locations", "Contact Us"

and the subcategories are – "Menu" -> "Drinks", "Starters", "Main Course", "Deserts"

"Locations" -> "Mumbai", "Bangalore", "Delhi"

The URL structure for the Bangalore location would look like this:

www.kimsrestaurant.com/locations/bangalore

Your URL structure will be organized according to your site hierarchy. This means, obviously, that your URLs will have real words (not symbols) and appropriate keyword coverage.

3. Create your site navigation in HTML or CSS.

When you create your navigation, keep the coding simple. HTML and CSS are your safest approach. Coding in JavaScript, Flash, and Ajax will limit the crawler's ability to cover your site's well-thought out navigation and hierarchy.

4. Use a shallow depth navigation structure.

As mentioned earlier, most page ranking algorithms use the page's depth relative to the main page as an indication of the page's content's importance.

Make sure relevant and necessary content isn't buried deep within the page hierarchy. Shallow sites work better, both from a usability and crawler perspective, as noted in this Search Engine Journal article.

5. Create a header that lists your main navigation pages.

Your top header should list out your main pages. That's it. Though adding any new menu elements doesn't reduce the efficiency of your SEO, it certainly distracts users from the main elements, which are your menu categories in the header. In case you have footer links, make sure they are the same ones in the header. Though this again isn't helpful for SEO directly, changing the order of links complicates the user experience, which will probably reduce the footfall on your website.

6. Link pages internally

Since it's not possible to categorise all sub-pages and create a perfect hierarchy, it's advisable to internally link as many pages as possible, so as to

a) Provide a useful pathway to navigate logically within your website, which helps reduce the number of clicks needed to reach a page on your website. Considering our previous point about low depth websites, this is one distinct advantage that cannot be countered.

b) Allow the usage of keyword anchor text.

XML SITEMAPS:

XML sitemaps serve a very niche purpose in search engine optimization: facilitating indexation. Posting an XML sitemap is kind of like rolling out the red carpet for search engines and giving them a roadmap of the preferred routes through the site. XML sitemaps basically provide a sense of direction to a website's crawlers about the links you want the bots to focus on. Since XML, which is basically Extensible Markup Language, is a machine-readable format meant for search engines and other data reliant programs like feed readers, they're pretty appropriate for usage in such scenarios.

Even though the URLs in an XML sitemap can be on the same domain or different subdomains and domains, each XML file is limited to 50,000 URLs per file and can be at maximum 10 MB in size.

When a site contains more than 50,000 URLs or reaches 10 MB, multiple XML sitemaps need to be generated and called together from an XML sitemap index file. In the same way an XML sitemap lists URLs in a site, the XML sitemap index lists XML sitemaps for a site.

```
urlset>
<url>
    <loc>http://www.google.com/</loc>
    <priority>1.000</priority>
</url>
<url>
    <loc>http://www.google.com/3dwh_dmca.html</loc>
    <priority>0.5000</priority>
</url>
<url>
    <loc>http://www.google.com/a</loc>
    <priority>0.5000</priority>
</url>
<url>
    <loc>http://www.google.com/a/cpanel/domain</loc>
    <priority>0.5000</priority>
</url>
<url>
    <loc>http://www.google.com/a/edu/</loc>
    <priority>0.5000</priority>
</url>
<url>
```

Standard XML sitemap design

Because XML sitemaps serve as a set of recommended links to crawl, any noncanonical URLs should be excluded from the XML sitemap. Any URLs that have been disallowed in the robots.txt file — such as secure ecommerce pages, duplicate content, and print and email versions of pages — should also not be included in the XML sitemap.

PAGE LOADING TIME:

It behoves content creators to keep websites that load quickly and don't put off the end user. Not only will it improve functionality for visitors and keep them coming back for some more of that snappy performance, it'll help robots crawl and index your website faster and increase crawler activity. Always test your pages to ensure images, text, and other content on the page loads as quickly as possible. If you find content that slows down your page, replace it with faster loading content or remove it altogether. Optimise your HTML, CSS, and Javascript files to ensure that everything loads quickly. Google's PageSpeed Insights is a good tool for this.

MOBILE PERFORMANCE AND RESPONSIVENESS:

Google's latest update affects the mobile version of your site. If you don't yet have an optimised mobile version yet, it's best to start now and create a fast loading website that uses resources efficiently and responsively. Google has updated its algorithm to show websites that are optimised for a mobile experience. Apart from the speed of loading, the fact that

your website is responsive or not plays a major role in Google's indexing. Websites providing an optimal experience are ranked higher and crawled more often.

ROBOTS.TXT:

The Robots Exclusion Protocol (REP) is a group of web standards that regulate web robot behaviour and search engine indexing. Initially, the original REP from 1994, extended 1997, defining crawler directives for robots.txt. Some search engines support extensions like URI patterns (wild cards). A later extension in 1996 defined indexer directives that robots used in the meta tags. Webmasters still apply REP tags in the HTTP header of non-HTML resources like PDF documents or images. The latest 2005 version contained the Microformat rel-nofollow, defining how search engines should handle links where the <a> element's REL attribute contains the value "nofollow."

REP tags (noindex, nofollow, unavailable_after) steer particular tasks of indexers and bots. In some cases (nosnippet, noarchive, noodp), they provide directives for query engines at runtime of a search query. Other than with crawler directives, each search engine interprets REP tags differently. For example, Google wipes out even URL-only listings and ODP references on their SERPs when a resource is tagged with "noindex," but Bing sometimes lists such external references to forbidden URLs on their SERPs.

Although robots.txt lacks indexer directives, it is possible to set indexer directives for groups of URIs with server sided scripts acting on site level that apply X-Robots-Tags to requested resources. This method requires programming skills and good understanding of web servers and the HTTP protocol.

Both Google and Bing make use of regular expressions, in order to identify pages or sub-folders that an SEO wants excluded. These two characters are the asterisk (*) and the dollar sign ($).

- * - which is a wildcard that represents any sequence of characters
- $ - which matches the end of the URL

Beware though – the robots.txt file is public and available for everyone to see. In the case you have private information that you don't want publicly searchable, use a more secure approach such as password protection. This file allows people to view which section the webmaster has blocked the engines from.

You don't need to hire an outsider to see a distinct improvement in your website traffic. Just following some of the painless tweaks is a sure shot recipe for success and higher traffic. **d**

10 ADVANCED SEO TECHNIQUES TO BOOST YOUR TRAFFIC

These are the methods that let you break in to another side of online traffic: one called 'even better!'

T he first thing to know about advanced SEO techniques is that they aren't a backup plan for you to fall on when the basic methods fail. Rather, they help you sharpen your web presence in ways you may not have thought possible. The second thing to understand is that while implementing these may demand some time, they are kinda fun to do all the same; provided you go about it with a clear-cut intention.

So, without further ado, the techniques themselves:

1. Make the site responsive and mobile-friendly

While we mentioned this in the "basics" section as well, it makes an appearance here for stressing its importance if nothing else. In the last two years

An example of a non-responsive site. That's the opposite of what you should be doing.

alone, mobile search queries have increased five-fold. Indeed, more number of people are using mobile devices to access the web. And globally, four out of five consumers use their smartphones to shop.

Many mobile users tend to be avid shoppers since they have the luxury of making a purchase anywhere, anytime. A feat that's quite difficult for desktop users. In other words, there's tremendous potential in gaining more traffic by making the site mobile-friendly.

2. Data research through end user value

Since Google is essentially a big data firm, all tools and platforms and even devices that they build have the singular purpose of procuring data from users so that they can build a better system.

Data research through end user value

That's one strategy you will do well to replicate: focus on the target group's data. Your intention at any point is to increase the search traffic by listening to the requirements of the crowds.

To obtain relevant users' data, there are quite a few social media platforms which you can make use of. The important thing is finding the platform where your target audience will be mostly at. For instance, if it's a professional crowd you are looking at, Linkedin would be a good place to be. Also, you can check out such sites as Quora, they give you a fair idea about the things that your target audience is discussing.

Yet another method of getting good user data is keyword research. You can use Ubersuggest that will generate long-tail keywords which are based on what users search for in Google. Visit ubersuggest.org, type in your keyword in the search box and click on "suggest." These key phrases may not appear when Google AdWords Keyword Planner is used. But they are extremely useful, nonetheless.

While data research is a useful thing to perform if the results actually apply to your users, answers can also be extracted from forum threads, Facebook groups, LinkedIn groups and the likes. If through your content, users' questions are answered, the search traffic will increase as will the conversion rate.

3. Audit the site framework

In order to find out the reason why you aren't getting enough search traffic or sales for that matter, you can perform an auditing of a site framework.

Audit the site framework

Auditing in the context of SEO is essentially a growth hack technique. One that will help you attract even more customers, and retain them.

By closely examining the overall performance of your site, you can set new goals and also implement the necessary measures to achieve those goals.

A few simple yet effective steps to perform a site audit to find more opportunities to increase your search traffic are given below:

Make use of quicksprout.com. Visit the site, then put your site URL in the search box. Once you have done that, click on the "Log in with Google" button. You will get an analysis that shows how fast the site loads along with its page size, number of requests etc. This gives a neat overview about your site, helping to judge whether there's room for improvement and if there is, in which direction the improvement must come. You can also see the mention of warnings, if any. You can simply scroll down the results page to see these warnings. The idea then is to find ways to eliminate them.

For instance, one of the most common warnings that appear is with regard to the length of the heading tag. Heading tags should be in the range of 15 to 65 characters long. However, many people overshoot the limit. If such a warning pops up, you can trim the tag while ensuring that the major keywords are included in the revised tag.

The heading tags are significant SEO elements that are basic, standards-compliant HTML. It's important that you get them right as Google certainly expects them in your site. It's no surprise that optimising the heading tags brings you more traffic. Of course, the heading tag length is by no means the only error you may find as a result of auditing the site framework. Many

other errors are bound to show as well. QuickSprout is a pretty efficient tool for finding these out so that you can fix them.

4. Leverage the power of the infographic

Infographics offer a simple means to increase your search traffic. The number of visitors you can gain with infographics is usually way higher than what you would get from sheer text-based content.

The key to creating great infographics is to focus on the information. It's hardly enough if you just add interesting graphic element without the presence of solid information that will be relevant to the user. A study done by Unbounce shows that the number of customers who are searching for inforgraphics is on the rise. It's said that just in the past 2 to 3 years, the demand for infographics has increased by 800 percent – a trend that's sure to continue for a good while to come. There's a simple reason why users

Infographics may be images, but they can sure add to your page rank

prefer infographic: the human brain processes visual data an amazing 60,000 times faster than text. Also, 65 percent of the users are visual learners. Then, there's the fact that 90 percent of the information which is transmitted to the human brain is of a visual nature.

To generate a large number of visitors to your infographics page, you can use the following steps:

a. Create the infographics: To do this, first you need to find a trending idea or topic which people are looking for. Then, create an infographic based on it. Infographics tools like visual.ly can be used for this purpose. Even better would be finding a professional designer who can create one for you.

b. Create content based on the infographic: Taking data from the infographic and using it to create an in-depth article to accompany it will be a good idea. Users are more likely to share an infographic if it is accompanied by fresh content. If the content you created is at least 2000 words long, your traffic has a better chance of doubling over time. Google does not index the text which appears on the infographic itself-since such text is part of the image. This is why creating unique content based on the idea makes sense.

Once you have the infographics and the content to go with it, submit the infographics to the top 20 infographics directories. This will be a time consuming process but beneficial all the same.

5. Have more optimised landing pages

A neatly designed landing page has a direct correlation to sales and lead generation. In essence, the more number of landing pages you create, the more gateways you are opening for search traffic.

The reason why a landing page is of importance is because that's where you actually initiate a relationship with the user.

Copyblogger Media is one example of a site that create good landing pages on popular topics. They even have professional graphics and layout on the pages. The traffic, links et all are then driven to the page with the aid of content marketing and press releases.

In order to find out if a landing page has good SEO value and to learn if users actually link to the page and share it on social media, you can first visit *ahrefs.com* and then type in the landing page URL. Then, click "search links." This will return such key parameters as the number of trusted inbound links, number of tweets, Facebook likes etc.

The potential of generating income from landing pages is huge. To this end, you need to have more optimized standalone pages. Studies show that

an overwhelming 48 percent of marketers create a new landing page for each marketing campaign that they initiate.

Dell is one company that has certainly used this idea wisely. They have more than 1000 landing pages and when they tested these landing pages against website pages, it was found that the conversion rate has gone up by a whopping 300 percent.

Here's how you can go about to optimising your landing pages:

Choose a long-tail keyword and use it to create a landing page. To cite an example, Copyblogger has the keyword "SEO copywriting" as their target on one of the landing pages.

If you are using Optimizepress or another landing page creator for Word-Press, ensure that title tags, keywords and a meta descriptions are added. Also, make sure that the keywords are used naturally to avoid keyword stuffing. Fresh content needs to be added to the landing page and ensure that the content in your landing page is actually useful.

While you should pay enough attention to the content, design is also something that should be in your list of priorities. For even if the content is great, with poor design, you may end up failing.

Yet another area you should focus on is building the links to the landing pages. Because, simply put, there exists no viable alternative to link building. Links still remain integral to Google's ranking factor. This means that even if you have great content, in the absence of quality links, the page may not rank.

6. Research your competitors and target their live keywords

Researching your competitor is the peace-time equivalent of spying on your enemy. This helps you leverage on the work that the competition did for earning good rankings on Google. One way to go about this is by spying on the very keywords that they are ranking for and using the same keywords and creating better content around them. You can adopt simple strategies-if that's not too heavy a word for this, like signing up for your opponent's newsletter. This will give you the lowdown on their email marketing strategy.

To discover the competitor's live keywords, you can try the following:

Visit *www.semrush.com* and add the URL of your competitor's site in the search box. Then, choose the relevant country and hit the search button. Then, analyse the live keywords. You will get the live update of the organic keywords as well as the current position of every keyword and the monthly search volume for each.

To check if the keywords mentioned are indeed ranking the highest as the SEMrush tool indicated, you can do a Google search yourself. By creating good quality content, you can target the same long-tail keywords. Ensure that the content accommodates the user intent. You can also build trusted, natural links to the page so that the page's ranking power is boosted. To get more long-tail keywords, you can plug the live keywords into Google AdWords Keyword Planner. There could be other long-tail keywords which are easier to rank highly than the head keywords.

Once you have created a piece of content based on the competition's live keywords, you should get in touch with other blogs and sites which have linked to the competition's web page. Inform them about the content

Research your competitors and target their live keywords

you have put up. Chances are high that since they have linked to the other article, they will extend the same courtesy to yours as well. This will bring more referral traffic to your page.

To find the linking blogs and sites, you can visit backlinkwatch.com and plug in the competitor's URL which is ranking highly on Google. The next step would be to analyse the referring sites. Look into the anchor text which the other sites are currently using to link back to the web page of your competitor. Check out if the link is dofollow or nofollow.

7. Use Latent Semantic Indexing(LSI)
SEO is a continually evolving science. One factor which makes this evolution inevitable is the frequent algorithm updates made by Google. This automatically makes it necessary for digital marketers to adapt if they have

to get the necessary results. One of the major elements that Google considers for ranking a web page is Latent Semantic Indexing(LSI). LSI is essentially an indexing and retrieval technique which makes use of a mathematical formula that identifies patterns in a paragraph of text.

This means that when a search engine crawls the content of a web page, it identifies and correlates related words and phrases and tags it as extra keywords for the page. Since LSI can find synonyms for a keyword, it can significantly improve your search rankings, provided you help Google understand the topic which you are writing about, and also its relevancy to the search query.

For instance, if the mention of the word "apple" is found in the content, Google could construe it as either of the two things: the fruit or the company. So, how will you inform Google of the exact meaning of the word you have mentioned? In comes LSI. The use of LSI is primarily to inform Google crawlers about how to index the content based upon your intent. Google actually expects you to type explicitly, " multinational technology company" when you mention Apple.

The bad half of this picture is keyword stuffing-which is when you overuse the keywords and phrases which are related to the main keyword. This is a rather bad SEO practice and one you should always avoid.

Here are a few useful guidelines to follow while targeting LSI keywords:

*Find LSI keywords which would have the same meaning as the main keyword but come with a different spelling and structure.

*Do not over-optimise for LSI keywords, otherwise there's a good chance that you could get penalised. Use them only where necessary. Also, ensure a natural flow to the content.
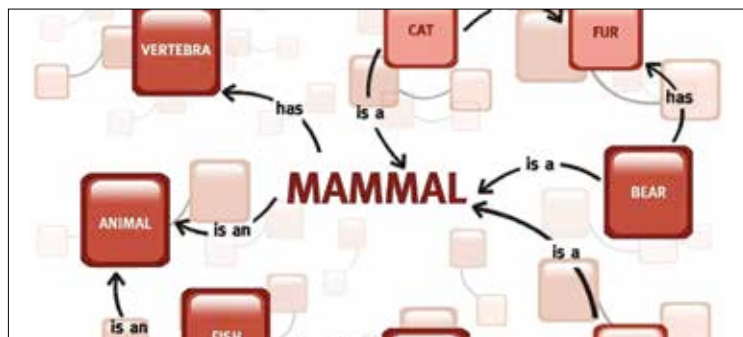
Use Latent Semantic Indexing(LSI)

*Use a natural tone of writing. There's no point in filling the content with LSI keywords only to have them override the main keywords you want to rank. The whole reason for the LSI key phrases is to give extra-meaning to the content and also to help Google understand about the topic you are writing about.

8. Refresh the archive pages

The thing with blogs is that even if you have been blogging for as little as four months you would end up with a decent volume of archive. Some of these posts might still be generating organic traffic which you can track easily for ROI using social shares, comments, search queries etc. All well and good. But the greater point is that you can append these posts and use their authority for higher search rankings.
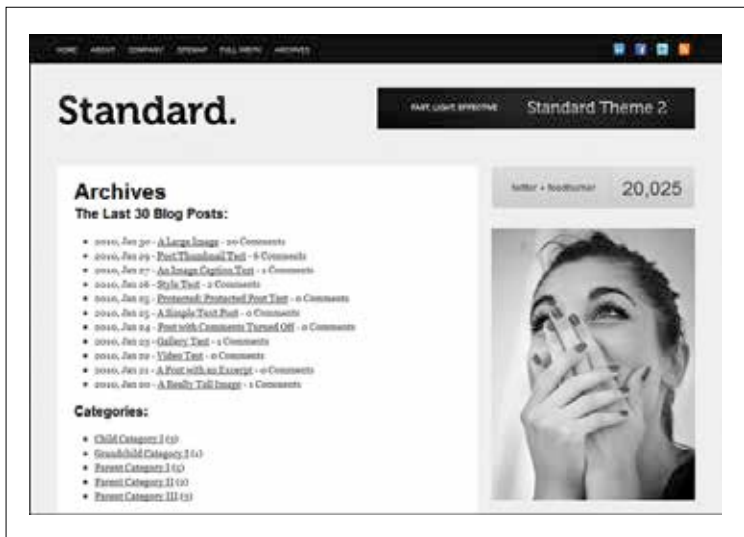
Refresh the archive pages

Instead of letting the archive pages lie there and gather figurative dust, you can identify the highest performing archive pages and create content that incorporates recent related developments. This could boost the search traffic significantly.

To revive the archive pages, you can adopt the following method:

Log in to Google Analytics and click on the "Behaviour" tab which you will find on the left side. Then, click Site Content>All Pages which will help

you see the best performing posts from between three and six months ago. Now, to refresh these archive pages and increase the search traffic to those pages, follow these steps:

a) Pen a sharable headline: This is perhaps the most important step of all. The headline should ideally evoke curiosity while at the same time shedding light on the topic. You could perhaps consider adding a number to the headline as it's observed that people share such headlines more frequently.

b) Add relevant data and stats whenever needed: Make sure that in the content, whenever you are stating something, try as much to back it up using data and statistics.

If experiments related to the topic that you are writing on have been conducted by someone else, refer to that in the content. The reader may not be too enthusiastic about buying into your idea if you are the only one propounding it. Referring to authoritative studies etc. will increase your influence.

9. Make use of authoritative social platforms

Getting active on authoritative platforms is a great way to generate more traffic to the site and also rank higher on Google. If your blog is relatively new, it will be unlikely that it will rank well in Google search engine for a high volume of keywords. This is because parameters like Page Authority and Domain Authority are pretty low at this stage. This is why leveraging bigger social platforms will be of particular importance in such scenarios.

It should be noted that by authoritative platforms it's meant here the sites which get literally millions of daily visitors and which rank for any of the keywords that they target. This doesn't include Twitter, LinkedIn or Facebook since the SEO value that they pass does not directly affect the ranking though it does lead to engagement. The sites that are meant here include the likes of Slideshare, Quora and Blogger. These sites help you improve the search rankings and also build a good following in a very short time period.

Here is what to do if you wish to leverage Slideshare for boosting your search traffic:

First of all, find a trending topic. Look for topics that are already trending on blogs and use these for content creation. For this, you can visit growthhackers.com. It's essentially a community made of growth hackers.

You will easily find a lot of trending topics and blog posts there. Choose any one of them which interests you. Just make sure that the topic is in some

way related to your business, and invest some time studying it. (And while creating the **Slideshare**, it's ideal if you don't go too long with the number of slides. You can perhaps limit it to around 35 slides, ensuring that the audience get good value from what you put in those slides.)

Once you have pinpointed an article, the next step is to create an outline. As you read through the article, get the major points and string an outline with them. Every item in the outline could be the content for a single slide. In case you are using content directly from a post someone else wrote, make sure that you get consent first so that you can avoid issues of plagiarism.

Adding relevant images to the slides will also make a good impact. And finding such images should not be hard in most of the cases. Free stock images can be found by searching for "free stock photos." Or you can visit sites from which you can download free stock images without any copyright restrictions, like Gratisography.

Before preparing the presentation, do take some time to study some of the more successful Slideshare presentations. You can find good presentations in the site's homepage itself. Rather than limiting yourself to mimicking their techniques, consider ways in which you can improve them. Maybe using better images will do the trick, or perhaps adding more figures-in terms of research data is what you need.

And finally, when you create the Slideshare presentation, don't forget to include a link to your resource page or landing page. Since the link which comes from this page is dofollow, it will help improve your rankings.

10. Deep link to internal pages

Deep linking refers to the idea of using anchor text to link to other pages within the blog. This helps Google understand the depth of the pages in your site.

 Even though most people pay attention to getting visitors to the home-page, ranking their internal pages is still a struggle. But the fact is that the older blog posts and landing pages-provided they have relevant content could bring in traffic even in the present day. For that reason, frequently linking to such internal pages is a good idea. If you interlink pages that aren't the homepage, the SEO value of the internal pages will be improved as also the search rankings for the keywords.

Smart as linking the inner pages may be, you should check beforehand the number of inbound links that go to the homepage when compared with the other pages. For this, you can visit opensiteexplorer and add the URL in the search box followed by hitting the search button. You should then

click on the "Top Pages" tab which appears at the top left-hand side of the page. This will help you view the ratio of the inbound links.

If more number of hits are on the homepage, it means that the bounce rate is high. In that case, you should do well to bring down that bounce rate. One efficient method to do that is deep linking.

Aside from that, there are certain other reasons for you to deep link to your internal pages. Like these, for instance:

a)Improving the page authority: Google is more partial to fresher content due to the assumption that users are more likely to find useful more recent information.

Even though regularly updating with fresh content isn't the sole way to improve the page's authority, when you link to the internal pages, you do lend more power to them. Even if your homepage may be having a higher PA, you should try to improve the authority of the internal pages too. Google actually gives fresher content score based on its date of publication. This freshness score contributes to raising the search rankings of the content. However, it obviously does come down with time, which means that as the content ages, the rise in organic rankings will dip.

b)Making the internal pages indexable: Another advantage of linking to your internal pages is that it makes it easier for the search engine crawler to find and index the landing pages.

For instance, if you have published a new post which you want the search engines to index quickly, you can ping such high authority search directories like Newsgator and Weblogs. These are search directories that are easily discovered by spiders since they belong to the same space and also makes use of similar program backend codes. You can do this easily by visiting Ping-o-matic and entering the blog's URL; then choose all directories and click on "send pings." After that, check out the sites to which the URL has been submitted.

One thing to keep in mind while linking to the internal pages from other blogs is to avoid over-optimising the anchor text. The best practices is to use brandname+keyword combination or LSI (latent semantic indexing).

While SEO remains a powerful tool to increase your online visibility and also drive more traffic, the advanced SEO techniques mentioned here will add power to your online presence. Sure, many of these aren't as easy to implement as the basic techniques like link building or keyword research. However, the pain points are well rewarded since these techniques are highly effective.

Hope you have great success with them! **d**

BASICS OF SEO
CHOOSING AN SEO FRIENDLY CMS

Apart from focusing on all the write textual rules to follow, the first step in making your website SEO-friendly is choosing the right CMS. It matters a lot in the long term...

W e've understood so far what this magical term SEO is all about and how important it is in making or breaking your website's fortune in terms of traffic. No matter what you're dealing with i.e. an e-commerce website, some online news portal, or just a simple blog, SEO plays a very crucial role to strengthen your widespread Internet presence and organic traffic across search engines. By creating a website that's easier for both the search engine indexing bots and real people to find and be familiar with, you'll have a better chance to boost leads, sales, and traffic.

SEO-friendly CMSes available for your website or blogs

If you've been visiting the Internet for long enough, then you must've noticed how independent bloggers, both beginners and veterans, fail to understand that creating blogs is super easy than actually managing them. In order to keep any website alive and updated regularly, the most important thing requirement is a steady stream of content. Your website or blog is no different to any darn living creature that needs to be fed regularly, or else it'll stop performing up to your expectations. With that in mind, let's take a look at a few SEO-friendly content management systems (CMS) that help us do just that:

WordPress

WordPress is the most popular CMS out there with a smorgasbord of plugins for every imaginable website management task. It also has a few good SEO plugins that don't require much tech knowledge to get going than any other software. However, when it comes to working with any software, the more you know about it, the better, as you can do a lot more with it. At the core, WordPress offers two ways to begin your journey. You can either go with

wordpress.com where the company itself hosts your website or wordpress.org where you can host sites on your own with the help of third-party Internet hosting services.

As a CMS, WordPress effectively complies with search engines. It deals with enormous web elements and features with respect to SEO in terms of pages, posts, and classifications to help web crawlers scan through your website and accumulate the data it needs for proper indexing. It also has the ability to create static URLs called permalinks that greatly benefit a website's SEO. There are many plugins and tweaks available that boost site's SEO factors on Wordpress, more than any other CMS.

In case you start playing around with WordPress themes and modifying its core code, be careful so as not to spoil its inherent SEO magic.

Shubham Rajdhar, co-founder & Managing Director at Web Helix Pvt. Ltd., which is a Mumbai-based web development company, says "If managed and configured correctly, WordPress is the best SEO-friendly CMS. It's robust, user-friendly and has many plugins that help with the title, meta description, etc. It also has easy-to-configure permalinks settings. In addition, there are a fair amount of image SEO plugins that help you insert SEO-friendly image ALTs. An optimized WordPress site can also do great in page-loading speed, which is a major factor in SEO."

Some of the core features that make WordPress an SEO oriented CMS are as follows:

Site speed: Normally, it depends on site owners on what type of content they publish or what themes their sites are running on. i.e. if the page has
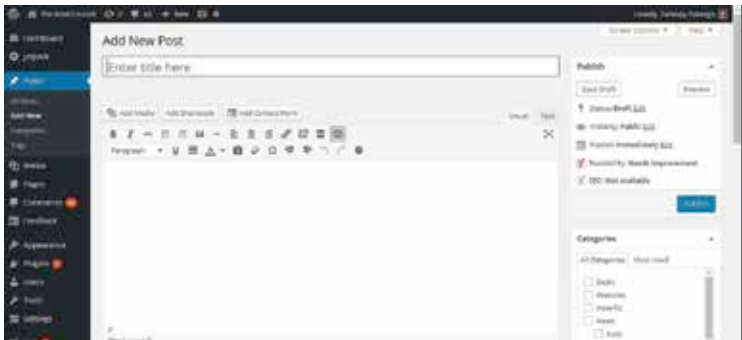
Add content using the default WordPress visual editor and upload media

to load multiple videos, GIFs, or run excessive scripts in the background, it'll eventually make the site slow to load. However, WordPress is lucky to deal with plugins such as WP Super Cache and Autoptimize that come to you rescue by aggregating and minimizing site scripts.

Mobile optimization: Google was pretty straightforward when it said that websites would lose high search-engine placement for mobile searches unless they are optimized for smartphones or tablets. Surprisingly, this didn't freak out WordPress users because they knew that no matter how simple their websites are, installing the popular Jetpack plugin will make them comply with Google's mobile website standards in just a few minutes.

Optimized content: Working around WordPress will get you the actual content in the form of Visual Rich Text Editor that offers not only different formatting options but also a well-defined structure that will easily be crawled by search engine spiders.

WordPress powers many websites. Some of the well-known examples are CNN, NASA, TechCrunch, eBay, Forbes, The New York Times, etc. In addition, last year's W3Techs survey stated that 25% of the web is now powered by WordPress, followed by Joomla and Drupal on 2nd and 3rd position respectively. So without any further ado, let's talk about them!

Joomla

Joomla is yet another content management system, which is not as easy as WordPress to implement. However, you should know that it's best known for having supported by many e-commerce and social networking websites. Unlike WordPress, Joomla requires a basic understanding of technical skills. If we have to position WordPress, Joomla, and Drupal according to their complexities, Joomla sits comfortably in-between WordPress and Drupal as "neither easy nor difficult" CMS. By now, you must have easily deciphered that it's the second most used content management system behind WordPress.

Joomla is just as good as WordPress for SEO. Additionally, URLs that are search engine friendly in Joomla has to be configured in the backend, which can easily be modified. The reason being, readable URLs leave a highly positive impact on search engine indexing.

For example, *http://example.com/index.php?* option=com_ view=item&id=619:joomla

You can enable search engine friendly URLs with these settings and create SEO-friendly alias in Joomla

It has been proven that such meaningless URLs don't do well in search results. Changing the URL to something more readable i.e. *http://example.com/seo-for-joomla* make search engines give priority to your URL while indexing within its database. If the URL also consists keywords, which in our case is 'seo for joomla,' it'll be an added advantage for site owners.

Creating HTML/XML sitemap files is highly important in order to ensure that Google is well aware of all your site pages and URLs while the process of site crawling is underway. As a result, Xmap, which is a free Joomla extension that can easily create sitemaps. In addition to many of its features, Xmap enables one to create a sitemap by considering the structure of site menus.

There's an extension called sh404SEF that offers Joomla site owners with a way to deal with SEO-oriented titles and meta descriptions. It's recommended from SEO point of view that one should not create titles and description longer than 70 and 160 characters respectively. It also allows one adding keywords, robots, and language tags that may lead to enhancing search rankings to some extent.

Drupal

Drupal is the third most popular content management system behind WordPress and Joomla that is used by many small as well as big scale organizations. As it is one of the most powerful open-source content management systems, it also requires a bit of technical understanding similar to Joomla. If we talk about a few core requirements to get started with Drupal, one needs to have a basic understanding of HTML, PHP, and other commonly used web programming languages. It doesn't necessarily mean you should be an expert in these programming skills. It's just that you should at least be able to troubleshoot common errors and problems with the code.

While opinions remain divided over whether Drupal is SEO friendly or not, many SEO experts believe SEO depends more on content than the system that is driving the website. It's been observed over the period that the size of the code is what leads to such debates in the first place. However, we put it this way: If you're looking to work with a powerful open-source CMS, you should consider Drupal. In the event that your requirements are minimal, WordPress is the best option available out there.

As far as the characteristics are concerned that make any SEO-friendly content management system, Drupal has it all. It includes an ability to work with URL aliases. As we have already discussed earlier, it's always better to have keyword rich, readable URLs instead of those looking meaningless. Drupal also works best with the page title, meta tags, sitemap, and Google Analytics. Apart from the code size, its simplicity and openness to comply with Google and its related services increase chances of performing positively in search results.

How to pick a CMS that's best for SEO?

From what we've seen so far in this chapter, it's conceivable that in spite of many dissimilarities surrounding simplicity, complexities, and usefulness of different content management systems, the essential characteristics remain the same to some extent for all of them. Frankly speaking, an SEO-friendly CMS out-of-the-box is simply a state of mind. Instead of that, making some website SEO-friendly irrespective of its CMS depends entirely on what you're currently doing with some of the existing techniques and more importantly, how well you do it. In this section, we have listed few things that will help you decide a CMS that's best for SEO.

First and foremost, you need to decide what your website requires and what you're expecting to achieve. Let us make it easier for you. You need to figure out how often you will be updating some content on your website? Is it going to be a blog or just a plain static site? Is it going to be handled by people who aren't skilled enough to deal with technicalities? Are you going to manage your site's content from remote locations? These are few questions that require being answered in order to determine an appropriate CMS, and from what we've said about some of the popular content management systems earlier in this chapter, you'll be able to take a correct decision.

Blog vs Website

In a simple language, every blog is a website but not every website is a blog. As confusing as it may sound, the blog is a dynamic website that

Your website should be based on as less number of lines of code as possible
for optimized performance

needs content to be regularly updated or at a particular time interval. On the other hand, the website can also be a static web page having its content that need not to be frequently updated. WordPress powers many popular blogs and online news portals. Similarly, many universities and nonprofit organizations have static websites based on Joomla and Drupal. Hence, if you figure out your content plans or how often you are going to update your website, you can decide an appropriate CMS suitable for your website.

Code to text ratio should be minimum

A page's text to code ratio is an evaluation of the size of content or text in comparison with the structure of a web page. Some SEO experts say that greater content ratios eventually end up improving the overall search engine positions and results. In most cases, it's recommended to implement as the minimum amount of code as possible. In the event you add an excessive amount of tags and scripts, it'll result in added weight to the web page, sluggish download speeds, and more importantly, flawed web browser rendering. In addition, it also makes it harder for site owners to maintain the code base.

Level of complexity

As we've seen already, different content management systems carry a different set of technical complexities. Hence, it's highly important to figure out who are going to manage the content of a website. If the website is going

to be handled by someone who doesn't have an understanding of programming languages or troubleshooting, it's better to go for CMS that is easy to operate. For the sake of comparison, WordPress site owners doesn't require much of a strong knowledge to manage the website. If people handling the content part are skilled enough to work with any required technologies, Joomla and Drupal are not bad options.

SEO and technical requirements

It's also recommended to figure out whether the CMS meets all technical requirements from SEO's perspective or not. The content management systems need to have options to customize titles, descriptions, and meta tags. It should allow static URL customization to make it more keyword rich. As we're already talking enough about URLs, we shouldn't forget HTTP Error 301 redirection. In the event of change or customization in the existing web page URL, it should automatically redirect users to a new URL. The CMS should also handle alt attributes to images. The reason being, many web pages rank for keywords entered in the alt tag of the images and not the page title or meta descriptions.

Sitemaps

In case you are not sure why sitemaps are important from the SEO point of view, they contain a site structure that helps search engine spider crawls through all the existing pages on the website. In a simple language, sitemaps are what shows Google spiders a way to navigate through all the web pages and directories available on a website. **d**

SEO HACKS PLUGINS

Wrapping your head around SEO might take some time. Until then, here are some quick and easy hacks to get you going.

Before we get started, let me make it clear that this is not going to show you how to bend the SEO rules using black hat techniques and basically cheat the actual SEO process. SEO hacks are mostly ways to streamline your SEO process by saving you a lot of time while increasing your natural search performance at the same time, all without breaking any SEO rules. And anyone looking to improve on SEO knows how valuable those two things are. So without further ado, let's get started.

Basic Checklist

Before we go into any in depth tips, make sure you have these basic things sorted out. Trust me, these can actually be all you need:-

Check your titles - Depending upon your content type and your target audience, the right titles can actually push your content to a whole new level. Clickbait titles might be quite irritating at times, but overall, they do work. Hold on! I am not saying that every title for every possible article needs to be like "So and So, and You won't believe what happened next!!". But take this title for example - "The best apps and websites for the elderly". Simply reworking it to - "If you love your grandparents, these apps are a must have!" makes it instantly more eye-catching. Make sure the title highlights the most attractive parts of your content in the first few words of the title.

Create Meta Descriptions - Although meta descriptions are not taken into account for search rankings, they do go a long way to influence click throughs once your site shows up in search results. Putting meta information in all of your site elements might even generate hits where you weren't expecting any.

Responsive Site design - Gone are the days where you needed to maintain multiple websites for multiple platforms. Responsive web design allows you to create a website in a way that adjusts it to be optimally displayed on each platform. This definitely improves the consistency from the readers angle. What it also does is removes the need to run multiple SEO campaigns for multiple sites.

Use Alternate methods of sharing - There are multiple platforms beyond the usual ones where you can promote your content. For example, you can

A responsive website instinctively feels better to use

look for a question on Quora that is related to the topic of your website, which is getting high traction. Post a meaningful reply to the same question and link back to relevant content on your website.

Create multiple versions of your content - You might have an amazing article in place on your website that isn't getting the audience that it deserves in spite of trying multiple methods of promotion. This is where alternate versions of your content comes in. For instance, multiple brands and companies now maintain a blog along with their official website. This blog helps them connect to their readers and viewers personally, and redirect them to relevant pages. More such alternate versions are YouTube videos, slideshows, instant articles on Facebook.

Take Feedback - Yes, the comments sections of websites are usually dark, dark places to hang around. But if it's your own website, you need to roll up your sleeves and dig in. You might just find a gem or two of genuine detailed feedback from your viewers. Trust me, if someone takes the time to actually tell you what is wrong with your content rather than just dissing you, they are going to be repeat audience with genuine interest in what you are doing. And it's not just about the detailed feedback. A high frequency of the same complaints and disses might indicate certain things that you need to change on your website.

Google Adwords Keywords Planner

Adwords is Google's online advertising service that allows services to display a brief ad in the search results from Google, depending on the particular search. The way it works is as follows - users create an Adwords account and enter their URL. Google analyses the website and its content to suggest the most popular searches for that content type along with the price to bid for the search keyword phrase. Multiple websites and providers bid for keyword phrases. Google takes into account the bid amount along with the content quality for showing the ads.
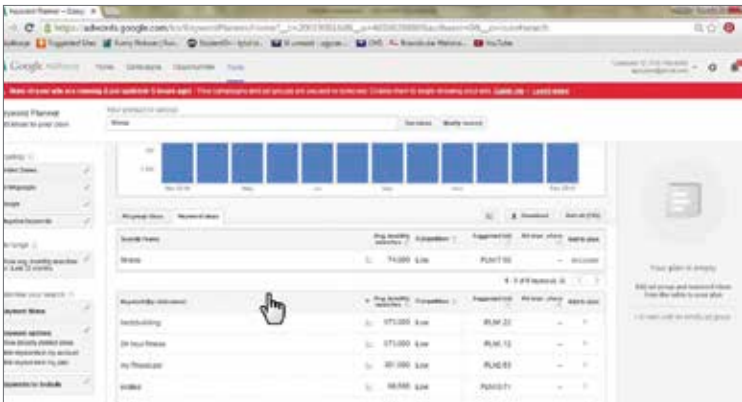
Possibly one of the most useful free SEO tools out there

One very useful tool available with Adwords is the Google Adwords Keyword Planner. Frankly, it is more like a suite of tools that help you plan your keywords better. The first sub-tool lets you search for better keywords based on your product, your landing page or your product category along with filters based on region, language and search providers. The second one shows you search volume for specific keywords, while the third one will allow you to see the same for all possible combinations of two different lists of keywords. These results can show you high volume keywords that you can run campaigns around, along with keywords and topics around which you can plan future content.

Harness your internal search

While browsing, sometimes a user takes the pain to remove their hands from the mouse and use both of them to type something into your web-

site's search bar. When that happens, you know that they really want to read something which isn't easily accessible on your website. This pool of searches gives you keywords that your users are already interested in. So creating content around those keywords will give you multiple advantages. First, newer readers searching for that content will land on your page, and second, your existing users will get the content that they are searching for. Also, you can check those keywords in your website's internal search.

Sometimes, a few simple changes to your internal search makes it a powerful tool to boost your pageviews and clicks. For example, if you look at Google's ways to show search results, one of the first things you will notice is the highlighting of search keywords in the results. This makes reading search results a lot easier and opening the most appropriate one. Without proper highlighting or snippets from the page containing the concerned keyword, it might appear irrelevant and even confusing to the user, driving them away from the site.

Build your author rank

Since Google closed down Google Authorship way back in 2014, there has been quite a lot of confusion regarding building one's author rank. Unfortunately, author rank is still an important factor in deciding the credibility of your content. Structured and organized markups are still used by search engines to show rich snippets in contextual searches.
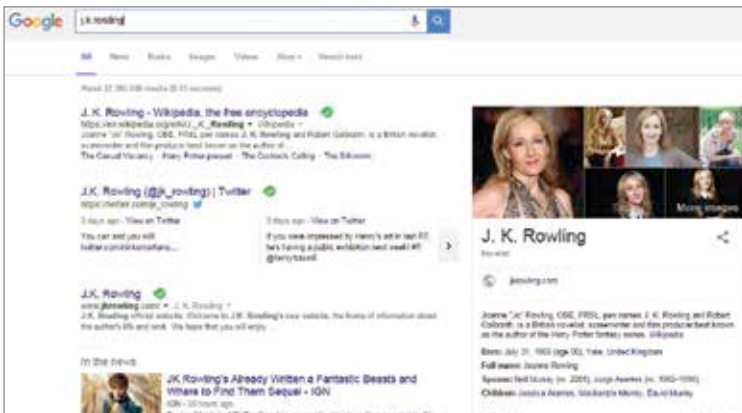
For example, searching J.K Rowling returns Knowledge graph results about her

Use Schema.org Article Markup

There are specific markups available for your content type. To be featured in the Top Stories section of the Google Search results, the Article markup has to be one of the following - Article, NewsArticle, BlogPosting or VideoObject. The Google resource page for article rich snippets at *https://developers.google. com/search/docs/data-types/articles#article_types* lists more tags that need to be present for an article to featured.

Google Analytics

There is a reason we have dedicated an entire section of hacks for this one. Google Adwords might be the highest revenue generator for Google but it is Analytics that actually shows you the results for the campaigns you are running. It also tracks conversions which might be sales, lead generation, specific page hits, or a file download.

Google Analytics itself contains almost all tools that you will need for your SEO needs

To show these results, Google Analytics takes multiple approaches. It shows higher level dashboard type data for a user who may not be interested in details, and a report based on further in-depth data for more advanced users. It also uses funnel visualisation to identify poorly performing pages and can also track where the users landed from, what their geographical location is and what was their duration of stay on the page.

It also has e-commerce related features to track sales activities and performance based on transactions, revenue and other metrics. Another

part, the Cohort analysis allows you to analyse user groups that are not your current users. This is really helpful when it comes to formulating marketing strategy.

There are more features that we could talk about, but that's not the point. Google Analytics can also be harnessed in ways that are beyond the usual and give your SEO just the right boost.

Referrals

One of the most common forms of generating views and clicks nowadays is through social media. And if you are harnessing the power of Facebook, Twitter as well as online forums and more, you will be getting a lot of what is known as referral traffic.

Referral traffic is Google Analytics way of describing traffic that originates from sources other than Google's search results. If a different site links to your page, the traffic generated from that link is referral traffic. You can check this on Acquisition>All Traffic>Referral to see the sources that are generating traffic for you. This might help you decide which platforms are working for you and which platforms you need to work on.

Another thing that this information can reveal is traffic from sites apart from the ones where you are sharing. For example, if you wrote an amazing article on Tips to survive hostel life, and that was picked up by another site that features similar content. Once you can track the traffic their backlink is generating, you can reach out to them for featuring opportunities and even other arrangements for content sharing. All of this just from the traffic report you just saw!

Annotations

If you are running extensive SEO campaigns or just can't wrap your head around all the steps that you are taking to improve your page's traffic, it might get a bit confusing to keep track of what worked and what didn't. Does the traffic spike at the end of January correspond to your Adwords campaign? Was the traffic slump two months back due to site maintenance? This is where Google Analytics' hidden weapon comes into play - annotations.

Any report that you see in Google Analytics has the option to add annotations. Just click the arrow button below any time-based graph in a report to bring up the annotations panel. Click on Create New Annotation and then enter the date and details. Typically, for a website, you should record changes such as:-

- Website content and design modifications
- Marketing campaigns.
- Maintenance activity and outages
- Competitor activities
- Industry and general news
- External factors that may affect (like weather or a holiday)
- Any other time based factor

After you have created annotations, whenever you view the graph, you can see icons under the corresponding dates, clicking on which will show you the annotated text. Annotations are shared by default and anyone with Read and Analyze rights can create annotations. So even if your page and analytics are handled by multiple people, this shouldn't be a problem to use.

Google Search Console

Google Search Console, previously known as Google Webmaster tools, is a pretty powerful tools when you sync it up with Google Analytics. To do that, go to the Search Console home page on your account and click Manage Site next to the site that you want to do this for. After that click Google Analytics property and select the web property that you want to link.

Once the above steps are done, go back to Google Analytics and navigate to Acquisition>Search Engine Optimisation. On this page you will see some reports out of which two are of utmost importance - Queries and

The Search console can even test whether Google can understand your content

Landing Pages. The former shows you the search queries for which your site is showing up in search results, corresponding impressions, average position in the results and the click through rate while the latter shows you the performance of landing pages by session, bounce rate, duration and goal completion. From the first report, you can take the keywords that you are ranking for and use those keywords in future posts or generate content around them. And from the second report, you can actually check how changes to your site design, or any particular content is affecting users. It is important to note that for the second report bounce rate needs to be considered along with the session duration, because a user who has found what he is looking for on your page will most likely not delve further into your website and close the session altogether.

Google Analytics also lets you harness internal search data. Follow these steps to set it up-
- Under Admin menu click on View settings
- Select View settings and scroll to Site Search settings
- Toggle the button to on
- On your website, type Test into your search bar.
- On the search landing page, find the letter in front of the equal sign in the URL. That letter is the website's query parameter.
- Enter the letter in proper box in Google Analytics and hit Save

Under Behavior>Site Search you can see reports on Overview, Usage, Search terms and Pages.

Each and every one of these is useful and can be explained in a lot of detail. The nature of the data is self explanatory. For example, using Search terms report with a 'no-result' parameter can show you what the users are looking for which is not present on the website. Planning content around that will definitely improve site performance.

Custom Dashboards

It doesn't matter how much you care about the performance of your website, no one can bear with hours of staring at data and trying to make sense of it. Google Analytics allows you to create custom dashboards which you

can load up with specific widgets that help you get the overview that you need to make decisions.

To create a dashboard, first navigate to your view then select the Reporting tab. Under that select Dashboards and click on +New Dashboard. In the next dialog, you can choose to create a Blank Dashboard or choose a Starter Dashboard with basic widgets. It also allows you to import Dashboards from the Solutions Gallery. Once you have given it an appropriate title, hit Create Dashboard to create it.

It allows you to add multiple types of widgets such as a specific metric, a timeline, a pie chart and more. You can also directly add a report to the dashboard by clicking Add to Dashboard below the report title and select the proper dashboard. After adding the two widgets allowed for the report, the new widgets linked to the report will show up in the dashboard.

Google Tag Manager

Although this is a feature within Analytics itself, there is a trick to using Google Tag Manager to optimise load times for your site, which eventually might go on to benefit impressions and get your site a higher ranking. If your site does use Google Analytics along with Twitter, Google+ and other embedded services, you must be aware that a ton of Javascript code is fired each time your website loads, to power specific functionalities for those services. Sadly, each of these code snippets slow down your website and a slow website is definitely bad for SEO.

To solve this, you can use Google's free to use Tag Manager tool. You can generate sitewide tags for your code on the generator and then specify rules to fire those tags. This will bring down your load times considerably as compared to your initial loading that was carried out on the page.

And more..

What this chapter has covered is barely the surface of all the tweaks that you can try to improve your SEO performance. The actual key to this is trying out different type of content, design and keywords to see what works. And even then a particular strategy might not always work over time. To stay on top of that, keep analyzing and tweaking! **d**

MOBILE SEO
THE ART OF DELIVERING CONTENT RIGHT WHERE YOU ARE

With optimising techniques specific to mobile and a whole lot of methods in their nascent stage, mobile SEO can be baffling. Well, here's the solution.

How is mobile SEO different from desktop SEO?

There are quite a few foundational elements of mobile SEO which are more or less the same as in desktop SEO. However, there also exist many techniques unique for amplifying search signals for mobile devices. For instance, while standard SEO elements like relevant and rich content, semantic keyword optimization and a natural backlink portfolio are significant in both, there are mobile-specific aspects that should be looked into such as:

1)Mobile web presence
2)Apple Maps and Google Maps
3)Local listings optimization
4)Voice search

1)Mobile web presence

The recommendation that Google makes is to have a single responsive design for the different devices that we use-including the desktop, mobile phone and tablet. Google has also developed a large volume of tips and tools to test your mobile presence.

2)Apple Maps and Google Maps

You can start with good local listings optimization. However, tweaks specific to each are called for. In Google Maps, those can be done with Google Map Maker and for Apple Maps, with Apple Maps Connect.

3)Local listings optimization

Local listing optimization is particularly suited for those businesses which have a low competitive density in the market. One common objection that many have towards the optimization is that since no one actually comes to the location, there is no use to promoting the local listing location. But there's also the matter of online visibility-which is always good for a brand, no matter how small in size it is.

4)Voice search

Yes, it's true that voice search isn't yet the big thing yet, however, it's still a fact that more number of people are using hands-free searching on mobile devices more than ever before.

Key things to focus in mobile SEO

The thing with mobile SEO is that many of the techniques and tools are still in their nascent stage. So, here we collate the absolute must-do things for a better mobile SEO.

1)Pay attention to core ranking

Google has different algorithms that rank mobile-friendly content higher in mobile search results. Unless your website is indexed, spending all your effort and resources on mobile keyword research and content creation will not result in getting greater traffic from search.

Increasing the page speed is also something that you should be concerned about as it's an important aspect for mobile searchers.

2)Resolve mobile-friendly errors

Though there are various mobile configurations out there, many studies have shown that in terms of ranking difference, there isn't much between a responsive design and some other mobile configuration. It'll be a worthy pursuit to fix such errors.

3)Mobile keyword research and content creation

You should give attention to the queries which searchers use more often on mobile devices. Same holds true for the keywords that are exclusive to mobile devices.

Google is certainly taking such things seriously as shown by the second part of their Search Quality Rating Guidelines-the one that reads "Understanding Mobile User Needs." When more number of Google's search traffic begins to come from mobile devices, Google naturally goes all out to serve the needs of their mobile searchers. And if your site can help Google do that, you will gain on the search results.

For local businesses, searchers who perform what Google calls 'Visit-In-Person Queries'(queries that mean the user will physically visit a real world location) are particularly important.

Then, there are the "Device Action" and "Do" queries. These also affect your business. For those unaware of these query types, Do queries are those with which the searcher tries to take some action-for instance, buy a laptop. Device Action queries form a subset of the Do queries. They are the commands that are given on Google to control your smartphone. (For example, the command, [open facebook app]. And also, there are the Know

queries- the ones with which the user is trying to discover something-for instance, which laptop to buy.

It pays to learn the differences between desktop and smartphone search intent and add/edit content as required. To make this easier, there are some great tools out there to help you do just that. Some of these tools are paid-like BrightEdge and SEMRush while others are free. You can try this on the Search Console for free: just choose Devices-Compare Devices in Search Analytics and then sort by the difference.

If a search query has a significantly higher number of mobile clicks compared to desktop clicks, it's probably a keyword you should pay attention to for mobile SEO.

4)App Store Optimization(ASO)

App Store Optimization(ASO) is SEO meant for app store search engines.
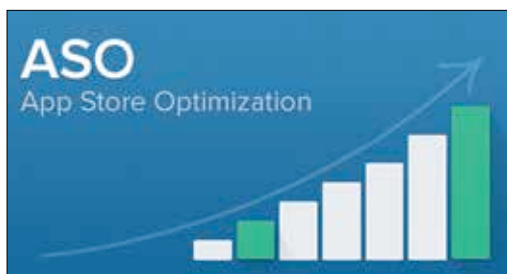
Performing ASO will help you with app indexing as well- you are, after all enriching your app content with keywords and making sure that it can be returned for relevant content.

5)App Indexing

App Indexing is a rather recent tactic that has emerged in the mobile SEO arena. Though it may not be as significant as some of the others mentioned here, it's still worth doing-particularly to improve visibility in smartphone searches. App indexing is SEO performed for app content.

Google's AMP-the newest tool in the trade

AMP is an easily accessible framework to create mobile web pages that are fast loading. The open-source initiative was made by Google so that publishers could easily improve speed-and thereby the user experience.

Also, there's the matter of Google as well as other leading web technology companies using AMP in the future as well. Indeed, such companies encourage its use- they have heavily integrated AMP into their respective platforms.

How does it work?

AMP, which is a framework to create mobile web pages includes three basic parts:

(1)AMP HTML – This markup language is a subset of HTML. It has a few properties and custom tags as well as quite a few restrictions.

However, if you are familiar with regular HTML, adapting the existing pages to AMP HTML won't be a big deal. You can learn more about the differences between AMP HTML and regular HTML by looking into the list of required markup for AMP projects that you can find online.

(2) AMP JS – This is a JavaScript framework for mobile pages. It mostly manages resource handling and asynchronous loading. Do note the fact that with AMP, third-party JavaScript isn't permitted.

(3) AMP CDN – This is an optional Content Delivery Network. Taking your AMP-enabled pages, it will cache them and also automatically make some performance optimizations.

How to AMP a site?

To begin with, a minimum of two versions of any article page must be maintained. These include the original article version which a user will usually see-the other being the AMP version of the same page.

AMP does not allow such things as third-party JavaScript and form elements. Therefore, you probably won't be able to have such used-to elements on standard implementation of your page like on-page comments and lead forms. Also, it's imperative that you rewrite the site template so that you can accommodate the restrictions. It should be less than 50KB. Another factor is that because of loading-intensiveness of custom fonts they have to be loaded with a special amp-font extension: this is so that there's a better control over the loading.

Then, there's multimedia which must also be handled specially. An example with images is that they will need the custom amp-img element and also must have width and height explicitly mentioned. Point to note here is that you can expect hassles while converting a legacy website into

an AMP template if the width and height attributes aren't already in use. Also, if the images you used are animated GIFs, you will require to use the amp-anim extended component.

Just like with images, a custom tag has to be used for embedding locally hosted videos via HTML5. This is called amp-video. On the other hand, to embed a Youtube video, a separate extended component exists, called amp-youtube.

Support for such utilities like slideshows exists with the amp-carousel. For image light boxes, there's the amp-image-lightbox. Also, there are social media embeds for Instagram, Pinterest, Facebook, Twitter and Vine via the extended components.

You will have to modify the article page's original version if Google, as well as other technologies which support the AMP Project are to detect your article's AMP version. For this, you'll need to include the below-given tag in your original article page- this is practically a canonical tag for AMP pages:

<link rel="amphtml" href="*http://www.example.com/blog-post/amp/"*>

How to monetize using ads with AMP?

The higher adoption rates of ad blockers is making it harder for publishers to monetise websites. For certain section of the users, one incentive for ad blockers is increasing the website load time since this improves the overall browsing experience. In this regard, AMP could be viewed as a response.

In fact, the project states that one of its goals is ensuring effective ad monetization on the mobile web while at the same time embracing a user-centric approach. In that regard, the objective is to provide support for a wide range of ad formats, ad networks and technologies in Accelerated Mobile Pages.

Most of the leading ad networks are already using the amp-ad expended component. It's assumed that even more compatibility can be expected in the near future. Some of these networks include:Google AdSense, AdReactor, Amazon A9, AOL AdTech, Flite, Adform, Taboola, Google Doubleclick, DotAndAds, plista, Yieldmo and Smart Adserver.

AMP Analytics

Analytics has become so embedded in the proceedings of the digital world that it's hard to imagine a future without it. And AMP certainly has analytics which in fact, is pretty smart. They have apparently implemented the philosophy of "measure once, report to many" so that multiple analytics tracking would not slow down a site.

To enable the analytics functionality with AMP for your site, there are two ways:

1)The Amp-Pixel Element

This is a pretty simple tag with which page views can be counted, much like a regular tracking pixel using a GET request. Plenty of variables can be passed through it, TITLE and DOCUMENT_REFERRER being two examples.

2)The Amp-Analytics Extended Component

This component is slightly more advanced than the amp-pixel.Since this allows for a higher level of configuration for analytics interactions, this is perhaps a more useful tool for implementing analytics in the site.

Unless you are trying to make Google Analytics work, you should have the amp-analytics. The required JavaScript library has to be added in the <head> following which you should configure it using some JSON markup in the <body> section of the page.

However, if you wanna have Google Analytics in AMP, you should look into the AMP Analytics section on Google's developer page. There, you'll find multiple examples of implementations.

How will AMP look like on Google?

To get a hang of how AMP looks like on Google, you can go to g.co/ampdemo on your mobile phone. There, you will find a demo provided by Google which shows what an AMP feature looks like in the SERP.

After visiting g.co/ampdemo, you can search using a keyword which will return a carousel on the top that will have AMP articles listed on it. Clicking on one of the articles will provide you will with a reading experience embedded in the SERP. To read another AMP-enabled article, you can swipe either right or left.

Like anything SEO, mobile SEO is also a field that's broader than one can digest easily. But that's not to say that it's a mountain you can't scale. By understanding the features unique to it and applying the appropriate methods, you can bring your mobile site to the world's attention, or to that part of the world that matters to you. **d**
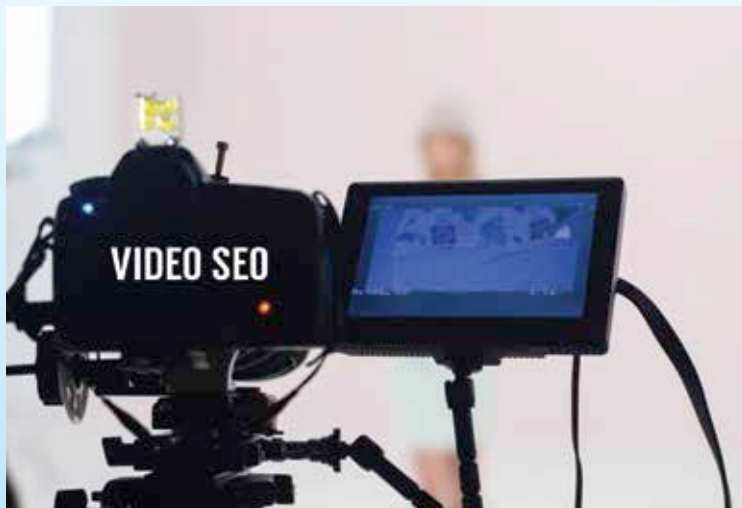
VIDEO SEO THE ART OF GETTING THE RIGHT EYEBALLS TO SEE THE VIDEO

Video being the most loved medium, it's a great tool for you to reach out to an online audience.

di9it.in

Video is a great way to reach, inform and entertain the audience - and earn some revenue while you do it.

The advent of cheaper yet good quality cameras and video sharing platforms means that more number of videos are being put out on a daily basis. This also makes SEO extremely important, if you want to get an audience to watch the video.

Getting the video SEO right can have a significant impact on your ranking. Here, we provide you with the necessary insights to do just that.

1. Try using videos that actually solve a problem or provide some information

If a video is to rank high against search terms, content that actually solves a problem or gives new information is the way to go.

The questions you should be asking yourself should be about the problems that your audience has and how to help them solve those problems in a cheaper and better manner. Create your content around that and you have relevant material in your hand.

## 2. Add interactive video elements

The internet offers the chance of interactions and this should certainly be leveraged in your videos. One simple way to do this is by giving the viewer a chance to take the next logical step after the video. To this end, you can add in-video links, surveys, quizzes and forms that could help you engage the audience at important moments and thereby drive action.

For instance, if it's a how-to video explaining how to use an app, the in-video interactivity could be a link that will take the user directly to the app where the newly learned things could be tried out.

3. Make the videos easy to browse and link to the individual video playback pages

You should always group your videos together and thereby create a video resource centre. This will make it easy for the users to browse all the videos you put up. Also, setting up a gallery or a video portal that has categories
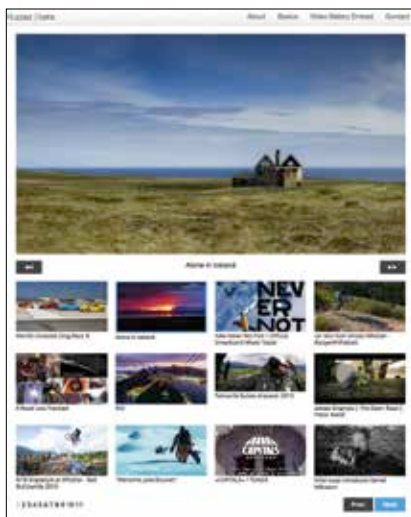
and tags is a good idea. This is so that finding exactly what you want is hassle-free and you can also seamlessly navigate between the videos.

Having an endless stream of video players on the same page wouldn't be a good option – it just makes finding what you are looking for that much harder. The smarter method is to have a separate landing page for each video – this way, the search engines can find and index each video asset separately.

4. Never go lax on the title and metadata

The title:-

The title refers to the top line of text which will be displayed in search results.

Keep the title descriptive with the use of keywords. The more descriptive the title, the more likely the video will show up when folks search for those keywords. Another thing to keep in mind is that the title which appears in search results usually gets shortened to about 65 characters – meaning, you need to put all the important keywords up front.

While the importance of adding keywords cannot be overstated, you should also be mindful not to include a lot of random keywords in the video title just so that the video will show up in many searches. The problem with this is that if the video title and description are not in tune with the content of the video, search engines could actually penalize you for it.

The description:-

A video description is normally the text blurb which shows in search results right below the title. The description ought to begin in a way that catches the viewer's attention – easier said than done.

Also, keep in mind the fact that just around the first 110 characters will actually appear, so make sure the first few words really count. You can use the words that come after the first 100 or so characters to describe the

video in more detail. The description space also couples as a great arena for including the links to your social media pages.

The thumbnail:-

The thumbnail, though admittedly small plays an important role in making people click on your video. In most video platforms, you have the option to either use a frame from the video itself or upload another image and use it as the thumbnail.

A cool thumbnail may not do much for you in terms of search result rankings. But it certainly acts as a hook for the audience to get interested in the video even before they see it.

Letting a picture stand on its own or adding text to it, both could get you good results. Whether text should be added or not depends entirely on whether you feel it's required. And if you think that adding a little explanation about the video on the thumbnail would help, go for it.

Also, getting more technical, make sure that the HTML code of your video landing pages are populated with enough hidden tags – particularly the microdata tags of Schema.org and OpenGraph tags of Facebook. Twitter card tags are also worthy of attention.

5. Use Youtube to drive the traffic back to your site

Get the best out of Youtube's awareness value by making shorter video previews for the content and using the annotations in Youtube to place in-video CTA. This will drive the audience back to the main website's video

resource library which is hosted on your own domain. You may consider the preview as a distinct piece of content. In that case, go ahead and give a different title and a summary as well. Maybe a change in the thumbnail will also be a good idea.

6. Host the videos on your own domain

Hosting the videos on your own domain is arguably the single most important thing you can do to get even more SEO value from the videos. Even though platforms such as Youtube and Vimeo are useful, it still makes sense to have the videos hosted on your own domain.

It's a good tactic to have an online video platform which will build a video sitemap on a subdomain of your site. You are actually giving away most of the credit for your content by using services such as Youtube to embed the video in your site.
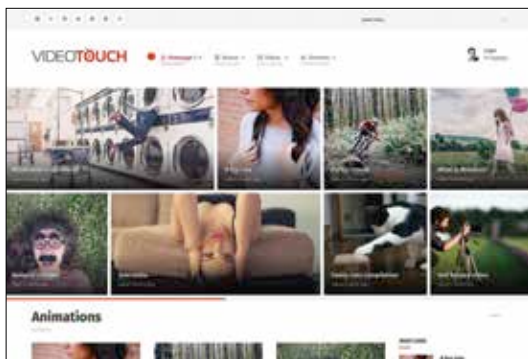
7. Use of transcriptions

In order to unlock the video's content, you can add the video transcriptions directly to the HTML of each page that hosts your videos. The transcriptions will help the user read about the video in case they lack the time to watch the video at the moment. Meanwhile, it also helps you provide the keyword richness which makes it great for search engine requirements.

Transcriptions can also be used to create extra content from your videos. For instance, a blog post which may link back to the video resource site can be provided in the transcript.

8. Have a video sitemap

Each entry in the video sitemap should have a link that will lead to a video's landing page – this, incidentally is why the video gallery or the resource

site can be valuable. In this case, metadata is only optional though it's still recommended.

Another recommendation is to opt for an online video platform which automates the video sitemap. That way, you would not have to be continually concerned about it.

9. Allow other people to embed your videos

For effective video SEO, you have to be a bit generous by not being too possessive of your content. Let other people incorporate the content into their own work. The easier you make it for others to embed the videos on their site, the more chance there is for inbound links to your website.

10. Measuring the impact of keywords

Implement a tracking system to measure how successful you are with your newest strategy.

Tracking may be built into the video platform or analytics software. At times, it's the custom code which IT will build. The tracking should

report the number of people that come in via the top of the funnel through either social media or search. Not only that, it should also track such contacts through the content strategy for closure.

Platform-specific marketing techniques

There are quite a few good video sharing platforms which you can use. Here, we provide tips on using some of them.

1. Vine

Vine is community-minded in that it allows a mutual interaction between the audiences and the users. Owing to the 'sweet n short' format of Vines, they are extremely shareable.

The fundamental facet of Vine is that it supports individual creativity while at the same time allows you to interact with an audience who may be looking for simple solutions to everyday problems. This gives you great opportunities to explore multiple methods to gain the followers' attention.

Tips:
Cater to the community: Make content that would work in the context of community interaction. Engage in such interactions and participate frequently.

Blend the creative with the practical: You can try a demonstration of your product or relate something that's interesting about your brand. The creativity comes in the presentation.

Leave the audience wanting more: A sequential strategy may be adapted by having a series of vines, posting at regular intervals so that people will come back.

Sell what you stand for rather than the product: People don't really visit Vine to check out product advertisements.

2. Instagram

You can include short video clips in Instagram that can be of use to your target audience. And more brands and businesses are taking to the platform. It's again a 'community and culture' channel – so most brands showcase their work culture etc. on Instagram rather than sell products directly.
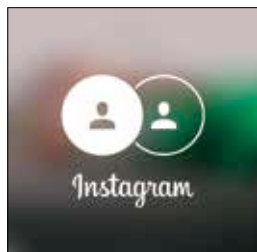
Instagrammers use hashtags while sharing videos. This makes the posts more searchable using keywords. This helps brands to create a more tailored setting for their fans.

Tips:
Interact more: First of all, find those users who are regularly conversing about your business or related areas. Follow them and comment regularly.

Be highly visible: Showcase your products (without hard-selling), show the work culture in the office, introduce your employees. Make sure you remain visible by engaging continually.

Be personable: This is probably something that applies for almost all social platforms. Being a community-centric platform – engage with the audience as a real person rather than a faceless brand.
Use hashtags: Instagram searches its content based only on hashtags. This means that unless you tag the content, it probably won't be seen by anyone other than your followers.

3. Youtube

You don't really need an intro for the world's biggest video-sharing platform. So, without delay, let's get right to the tips.

Tips:
Stress on quality: Since longer format videos can be posted, it makes sense to ensure a higher quality for the video, even getting professionals to shoot. Also, ensure that the audio is top-notch.

Use plenty of keywords: Make sure that you add enough keywords in the video's title and descriptions. Also, include a link to your site in the video description. Google actually has an algorithm which makes it more than 50% more likely that a site is ranked higher if it has video content.

Practical content: Explainer videos, tutorials etc. are a great way to engage with your audience on Youtube.

Monitor the content: Keep an eye on what's working and what's not on

your channel. If any video is performing poorly, you might as well remove it since it may cause the rest of the content to dip in value.

Add call-to action: Insert a call-to-action at the end of the video, thereby giving the viewer the option to further engage.

Share it: Once the video is up on Youtube, share the same with your social media accounts.

4. Vimeo

Vimeo is also a video sharing platform and caters videos that are creative in content, execution or both. If your target audience are the creative kind, Vimeo is worth considering. The viral potential is significantly lower though.

Tips:

Use it for building a community: It won't be smart to use Vimeo to trigger mass consumption of your content. But it's a great place for creating a community. Interact with those viewers who leave comments on your videos. This will give the viewers more reasons to return and maybe share the videos.

Customize it: Vimeo is one of the most aesthetically pleasing platforms of its kind. And it can be completely customized using a paid account.

Never compromise on quality: Quality is the keyword with Vimeo and quality is what people come to the site for. This makes it imperative that you maintain high quality across all your videos.

The chance of getting paid: If your company is into video production and you are looking for a venue to showcase original videos, Vimeo On Demand is a good place. This direct-to-fan distribution has Vimeo's video player and good supporting tools. Even more important, they have a good audience base. There's a 90/10 revenue split on the offing.

Videos remain a more appreciated medium among the audience – making it a great tool for businesses to reach out to their audience. Happy filming, and sharing! **d**

SEO FOR SOCIAL

Gone are the days when just pushing content on social websites was all that mattered. These days you have to tailor content for each platform.

One of the major changes in the way that social media management is being applied in the past few years has been to moderate and modify social media profiles and the information shared on these profiles to provide the best possible optimisation for search engine queries. The way to optimise searches through a social media account is not just a simple matter of increasing the traffic on your profile through a greater number of followers on Twitter or Facebook. In 2013, much to the shock of social media experts, Google's Matt Cutts announced through a video that Google search rankings are not influenced by metrics on social media such as Facebook likes or Twitter followers. This is despite the fact that market experts, until that point, were told by both Google and Bing that Twitter fandom directly affects search results. Over the years, it has been discovered that while links definitely do exist between social media and search engine optimisation, these links operate in far more subtle manners than previously thought. There are many differences between the way pages and profiles are ranked on Google and Bing search results. In this article, we analyse some of the ways in which social media profiles and pages affect search results.

Tailoring social media content for SEO

The first thing to understand that search engines use many different metrics to vary how search results are shown and the algorithms that determine search results combine information collected from all of these metrics. This makes the task of pinpointing any one characteristic that can guarantee optimisation at the highest level an impossible one. This is also why the question of the amount of importance given by search engines to social media popularity has many disputed answers. The equation is further complicated by dynamical relationships between search engines and social media platforms. Facebook, for example, allows Google to index its content in a relationship that benefits both parties involved: better search results for Google and more traffic for Facebook. This is why mobile searches often lead you directly to the Facebook app when you search for a person and find a Facebook link. The indexing extends to status updates and posts on timelines as well, allowing search engine users to search for extremely detailed queries. Search engine optimisation therefore is no longer just a popularity contest, it's also about tailoring content on social media to optimise search results.

It is possible for individuals to drive traffic to pages based on content through posts on social media accounts which have a higher following

Facebook page of Neil Gaiman, showing links to his authored content and website

which in turn increases their search ranking. Pageranking of one page can influence the pageranking of pages shared from the first one.

It pays to be social media savvy

Despite the fact that Google and other search engines offer no clear answer to how social media pages are ranked (and it is understandable that they don't, to prevent search engine experts to simply tailor websites to respond to these metrics alone and to reduce the efficacy of actual search results), it is still a good idea to use social media management in tandem with search engine optimisation as the results of one directly influence the results of the other. Twitter and Facebook following also influences indexing time, if not the ranking directly, with some studies showing that indexing time can be cut down by up to 50% for accounts with greater media following.

It also pays to have social media accounts irrespective of whether it drives traffic to your other pages through search engine optimisation, simply because social media pages themselves are often at the top of search

A Google search for Lionel Messi shows his Twitter handle and
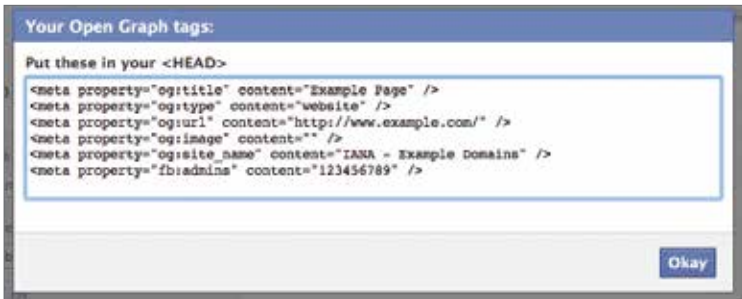Instagram account amongst the first few results

results. Take the following image of a google search for Lionel Messi. Within the first page of the search results, the social media accounts that he owns and operates feature prominently. A lot of traffic is automatically diverted towards social media accounts in this manner. This holds true for every person and corporation. Diversification through social media accounts on multiple platforms therefore, provides a bigger range of data for search engines to index and is likely to increase traffic.

Using Open Graph to drive traffic

An extremely useful tool that marketing media experts have at their disposal is Open Graph. The Open Graph tool allows developers to place meta tags in the <head> part of the code of the website with the intention of exercising control over how information is shared between Facebook as an application and any third party website that is shared on it. There is very little direct optimisation that occurs by using Open Graph but the benefits of learning Open Graph are still worth it as it will lead to better performance of your social media pages which in turn affects search results indirectly. There are quite a few characteristics that you can influence using metatags. Some of the basic characteristics are *og:title – It is the title of the content you wish to share. The title by default is assumed to be the name of the link. It is advisable to keep this to a reasonable length while keeping the key content of the link visible

*og:url – This is the URL for the shared page, but it's possible to provide multiple links that the share can lead to depending on different parameters

Your Open Graph tags:

Put these in your <HEAD>

```
<meta property="og:title" content="Example Page" />
<meta property="og:type" content="website" />
<meta property="og:url" content="http://www.example.com/" />
<meta property="og:image" content="" />
<meta property="og:site_name" content="IANA - Example Domains" />
<meta property="fb:admins" content="123456789" />
```

Okay

The various Open Graph tags that can be added

and conditions under which the link is clicked. A good way to tailor your content to users across different kinds of platforms.

*og:type – These different categories indicate the nature of the link that is being shared, such as a web based article or blog, an entertainment based book, game or movie or business such as a company, hotel or restaurant. This enables developers to provide another layer of descriptor to the links they share, and this in turn shows up on search engines.

*og-description – This is the main meat of the content, which describes the kind of link that is being shared in detail. Again, it is up to the developer to decide what kind of description goes in here.

*og:image – This is vastly important as leaving it blank often leads Facebook to put in a random image that may have nothing to do with the content. Choose an image that is appropriate for the content being shared as visual content drives people to a page far more effectively than text based content does.

Open graph can be implemented by directly modifying the <head> part of the HTML. There are plenty of plugins/extensions to help you do this as well, such as the official Facebook plugin. Using Open Graph is a good way to give a good boost to the way your links on Facebook are indexed.

Twitter cards

Twitter cards allow additional content to be incorporated into the 140-character limit on Twitter. This adds a button called 'View Summary' at the bottom of tweets. Again, making Twitter cards can be easily done by using CMS plugins. The characteristics that can be modified are:

*twitter-card – This is similar to og:type and describes the type of content that is being shared.

*twitter-title – This is similar to og:title. The title is used to provide a small descriptor.

*twitter-url – The URL of the content that is being shared is added to this part.

*twitter-description – The description of the link is added here. All of the content here can end up on search results which is why it is important to ensure the right kind of text goes in

*twitter-image – Provides an image that acts as a thumbnail to the content that is being shared.

An example of a twitter card, which links to an external article

To fully benefit from Twitter cards, pages need to be approved by Twitter. The Card Validator performs the same role as the Facebook Open Graph plugin and gives you the option to check your links and debug any errors.

Optimising Google+: A powerhouse of optimisable content

Search results are also influenced by how authoritative the person is. In a series of questions posted by Danny Sullivan from www.searchengineland. com to both Google and Bing, both organisations responded that they do determine the kind of authority that a person has to a response based on their twitter feed. For example, Google and Bing would show responses to a query about black holes by Stephen Hawking as a more favourable search response when compared to a response by a professor from a local college of lesser repute. In fact, for search engines, the only way to categorically figure out which response is better to a question type search query is only through the reputation of the person who answers such questions only. This is especially true for users on Google+ as profiles are integrated directly with author ranks. Google Authors is a brilliant way to optimise search results for your articles and to drive traffic. To do this, include a rel="author" tag on the websites with your content. Doing this along with ensuring that your Google+ profile has a link to all your authored content

and ensuring all your authored content has a link to your Google+ profile, you can ensure that all search results that show up links you have authored also show a list of your publications, sourced directly from your Google+ profile, which is a neat way to build a reputation online.

Social media as a search engine

Another important thing to keep in mind is that social media platforms are in themselves being considered as search engines. Ranging from large corporations to individuals, public perception is driven by searches across Facebook and Instagram as well as other social platforms. Social media integration, even without the added benefits of search engine optimisation is still extremely important for individuals on the internet as it helps build a larger online presence which will drive traffic to your websites directly anyway. Through a judicious use of back links on social media websites to your webpages, it is possible to directly make visitors get to your webpage, which will in turn provide more authoritativeness to your profile and cause
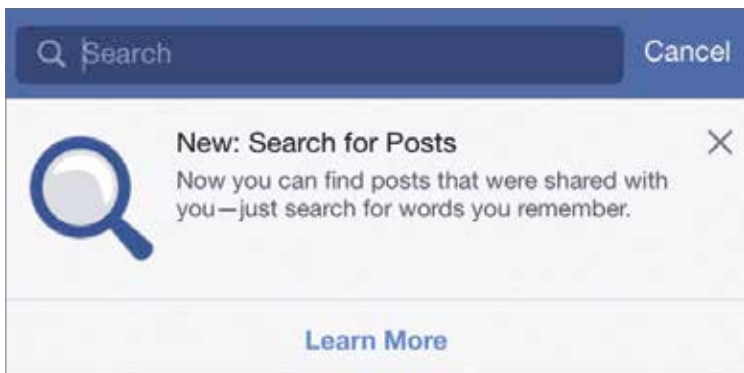
Social media websites are fast morphing into search engines

it to rank higher on search engine algorithms. It is an intangible but vital thread that connects social media presence and search engine optimisation but it is one that cannot by any means be ignored.

Despite the ambiguities involved in how search engines use algorithms to rank results from social media it is still a good idea to optimise search engine results by optimising the content on your social media. There is no way that this is not a good idea as social media popularity is always useful for individuals and enterprises of all kinds. **d**

SEO FOR THE BIG THREE

When we think Search Engine we think either Google, Yahoo or Bing. It's come to a point where we can't imagine a world without them. Let's find out what it is that makes them tick.

A ny mention of search engines mostly conjures up an image of Google, while Bing and Yahoo often go unmentioned. It is interesting to know how these search engines differ in the way they optimise their search results. Search engine optimization across multiple platforms also provides an enterprise or an individual with a competitive edge over competitors who rely exclusively on Google based search engine optimization. In this article we analyse the differences in search engine optimization strategies for different search engines.

How search engines display different types of content

A good first step is to identify which search engine drives traffic to websites. This can be done quite simply using Google Analytics. There are plenty of tutorials online that show you how. Once you identify this, there are two ways you can proceed: Consolidating search queries from your strongest traffic diverter or by trying to bring in higher results from your weaker search engines. Either way, one of the key ways to optimise your strategies is to identify the strongest search engine for the type of product you try to market. For example, Bing shopping services display reviews that are collected from different e-commerce and review websites. With tabbed navigation and a dedicated explorer tab for related searches. Searches for products on Bing often return different results and have a different impact on the internet user's mind than shopping based searches on Google. At the same time, books and magazines are better indexed on Google through the 'Books' tab, especially with regards to scientific magazines which offers seamless integration with Google Scholars for the authors of articles. Depending on the product, different search engines index and display results in different manners. Based on the engine you want to specifically optimise for, it's important you opti-
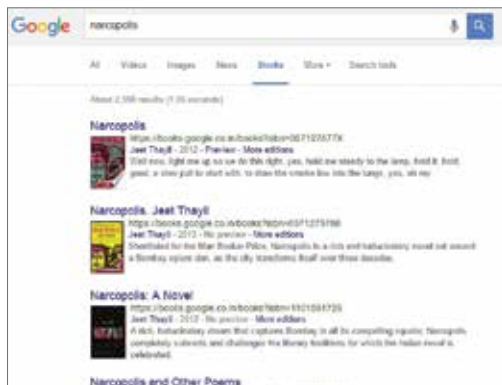
A book search on Google automatically leads you to a books.google.com page

mise based on how that particular engine displays results for searches in your particular category.

The similarities: One SEO strategy to rule them all

Outside of these differences however, it must be noted that indexing on search terms and the techniques that are used to optimise a page for search engines are more or less the same across search engines. Factors the lead to adequate optimization on Google are quite likely to produce satisfactory optimization on Yahoo or Bing with a few minor tweaks. They all depend heavily on the metadata of the page to index and display results and optimising this aspect will lead to good results. There are no different strategies as such for optimising different search engines because of these similarities across the search engines which are quite similar. Also, search engines often have alliances and vastly similar algorithms which makes it possible to simultaneously optimise across different search engines. Yahoo for example, has a tie up with Bing making all Yahoo based web searches identical to Bing based ones. The only differences lie in the advertising strategies and layouts of the two search engines while displaying results, something that need not concern us while we try to optimise our webpages for these search engines.

The differences vary based on the target audience you would like to impact. They may tend to use different search engines by default which results in minor tweaks to SEO strategies. It's important to remember that search engines have close relationships with products and browsers. Google Chrome users tend to use Google as their default search engine whereas Internet Explorer users favour Bing. Moreover, android phones often have Google Chrome as a preloaded app which mobile phone users tend to prefer. Therefore, based on your audience, the type of search engine used varies.

Tweaking for Bing

There are very few changes that one needs to make to their SEO strategy depending on the search engine. The theme here seems to be that Bing prefers local search results more favourably than Google, which is more concerned with overall popularity. The key differences in the way these two search engines understand search queries are

Queries with multiple interpretations: Bing displays local results first in such cases. Google displays the most popular website for such a query

Contextual freedom: Google offers a little more sophistication with the way you can word queries. 'Restaurants in South Mumbai' and 'Food in Colaba' are likely to show similar results. Bing is a little more restrictive in terms of linguistic freedom and exact search terms are preferred.

Flash based webpages: Google does not index flash content whereas Bing actively values pages with flash content and may rank them higher.

Age vs Authority: Google has no algorithmic preference towards the age of a webpage whereas Bing tends to use the age as a valid metric for page ranking. Both search engines however do tend to show some favouritism towards domain named with a .edu or a .gov extension.

Apart from the subtle differences mentioned above, it suffices to optimise your website specifically for Bing or Yahoo only by ensuring that title tags are given a lot of relevance. This is because Bing gives more importance towards keywords in title tags than Google does. Exact sequences with a smart choice of title tags should provide enough of a cutting edge to optimise

Bing Webmaster Tools offers a wide range of analytical tools for your website

your webpage specifically for Bing based search queries. It is probably also a good idea to register/submit the website to Bing Webmaster Tools. This ensures that the contents on your page are indexed, which will guarantee that Bing uses metadata from your page and starts directing web traffic towards it.

Mobile friendly pages

Both Bing and Google have recently started optimising search results specifically for users operating out of mobile platforms. This is displayed in terms of a grey subtext beneath search results which say 'Mobile Friendly'. While it is unclear how much of an algorithmic difference a mobile friendly webpage makes for mobile based searches, it is still a good idea to specifically

A Google developer tool to check for mobile friendliness of your webpage

optimise your webpage for mobile platforms as a vast majority of search engine queries are now being directed through smart phones and tablet based devices. Mobile based search engine optimization is an area that is sure to witness a lot of progress over the next few years as search engines seek to optimise their results on increasingly mobile based internet services. There are many tools available on Google Developers to check if a website is mobile friendly. **d**

OF PIGEON, PANDA, PENGUIN AND HUMMINGBIRD

We explore the solid foundations – and some rather intricate pillars – that make up the most ubiquitous and pervasive and search engine in the world.

Out of some obscure sense of political (technological?) correctness and a slightly comical spirit of inclusiveness, we tend to use the broad term "search engine" when we in fact have in mind Google - the search and advertising behemoth that has broadened its horizons (and, dare we say, invaded ours rather aggressively) in the past decade and a half. This chapter will talk about Google's PageRank algorithm that ranks its search results, the updates to it, and how they have improved the quality of results that it churns out.

Google's PageRank translates simple and intuitive principles into rigorous and efficient math to give you high quality, relevant results. A high ranking page implies more relevant content and less annoying spam. If a high ranking page links to another webpage, it's a fair assumption that the linked page is important and reliable as well. PageRank does consider it so, and is therefore recursive in that sense. The second factor that determines the rank of a page is its actual content -- its text, how it's formatted, how it looks, and what the pages it links to contain.

Judging a book by its cover
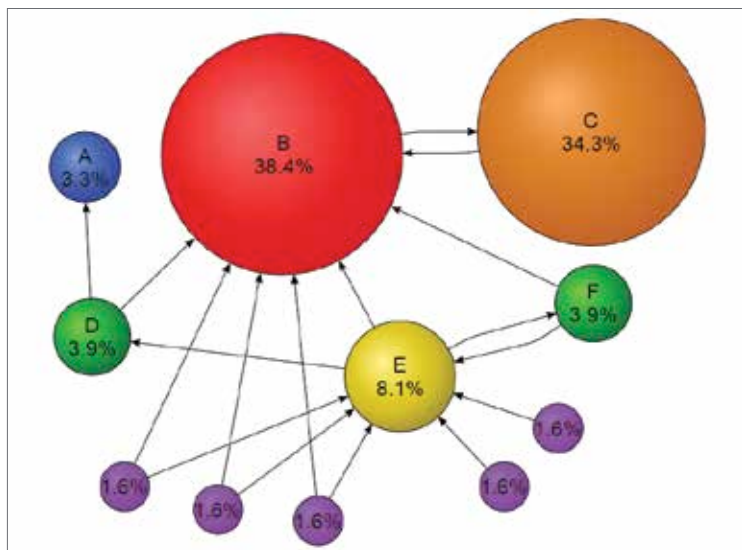
A very rudimentary visual representation of Google's PageRank algorithm. A lot of pages link to B, so it's important. B links only to C. Even though C has just one link to it, it's from an important website. That makes C important as well.

The barebones PageRank algorithm developed by Google's founders Sergey Brin and Larry Page in 1998 has received several major updates over the years for things like making search results more contextually relevant. As a result, the PageRank algorithm today is significantly more complex than the first rudimentary methodology laid down by Brin and Page. However, the basic idea remains the same. PageRank works by representing the entire internet as a graph. Mathematically, the graph's nodes represent the webpages, and an edge between two nodes in the graph represents a link between those two pages. Naturally, these graphs will be directed, i.e. the edges will have a direction specified because a page may link to, but may or may not be linked by, another page. The graph is then translated into a square matrix (N x N) of gigantic dimensions since each row (column) represents links from (to) each page. For the entire internet, N easily approaches tens of billions.

The ranks of all the pages are computed simultaneously by finding the eigenvector of the matrix -- a specific "direction" in the matrix which, when tweaked, leaves the other "directions" unchanged. So for a pair of pages, the one with the higher rank will be displayed higher up in the search results.

The crucial step, and also the one most mathematically and computationally intensive, is the computation of the eigenvector. Fortunately, since it's not common for websites to randomly link to unrelated webpages, a huge majority of the matrix elements are 0, simplifying the calculations a little. It should also be no surprise that this step is the one that has been innovated upon the most. After Page and Brin's "power method", the revisions in the PageRank computations have included the accelerated power method, aggregation/disaggregation methods, Krylov methods and Schwarz methods, spanning a total of seven years starting from 1999.

Building a better mousetrap

Starting with 2011, each year has seen one major headline update to the software, respectively codenamed Google Panda, Google Penguin, Google Hummingbird, and Google Pigeon.

Panda focused on downgrading "low-quality" or "thin" websites, and as a result news sites and social media websites gained prominence in Google's search results. Penguin was targeted at websites that used search engine optimisation (SEO) techniques that amounted to spamming or link manipulation to make the website seem more important that its content deserves to be.

Hummingbird was arguably the quantum leap in terms of making Google's search results "smarter", because in addition to considering synonyms, it now also emphasised the context of each query. Michelle Hill, marketing manager at Vertical Leap, explains it as a need to "think about why people are looking for something" instead of simply looking at what they typed in as their query.

Pigeon's aim was to work in tandem with Google Maps and give more importance to search results geographically closer to the user. Naturally, this also impacted Google Maps search results. Searching for a grocery store near you is now more likely to throw up Old Uncle Jimmy's store on the corner of 14th street than it is to point you to the Big Bazaar at the end of the busiest lane in the center of the city.

OC master race

Panda itself was updated several times from February to April 2011, at which point it was made operational. It uses the number of links to a site and the number of queries about the site's brand to determine a ratio which in turn determines each individual page's factor. In May 2011, Google's webmaster blog published a guide to building high quality websites. It gave out a general idea of what Google thought about while trying to downgrade unhelpful websites. Trustworthiness – both for the information given and taken by the website – is paramount. Google also considers whether the article is written by someone with in-depth knowledge of the topic, and whether it is merely rehashed content with synonyms thrown in for fluff, eventually to nobody's benefit.

In 2012, the blog outlined what it termed "black hat" SEO techniques – aimed purely at getting a higher ranking and not actually helping users, these practices include keyword stuffing and paying for links and do not contribute to the user experience in any way. Nor do they make the website easier to index. Google doesn't like that one bit, so it decides to take a kitchen knife to such websites and ensures that their ranking decreases.

Reading between the lines

Google Hummingbird -- named so because of the need to be "precise and fast" -- represents a monumental change in the search engine's mechanisms. Riding on the back of its past updates Panda and Penguin, Hummingbird enabled Google to understand context behind queries, and therefore looked at the actual intent behind the searches rather than simply matching words.

It should be noted that this doesn't merely consider synonyms, which it already used to do anyway, but also considers neighbouring terms in the search as well as the immediate past queries.

For example, once a search for "Terminator lead actor" returns Arnold Schwarzenegger to you, you can follow up with "How tall is he" and Google will understand that you're referring to what you just found out. Similarly you could work with your favourite sports team, looking "FC Barcelona fixtures" first, and then asking for their top goalscorer.

It's important to remember that while this integration of natural language processing (NLP) did produce more relevant contextual results, it did not impact existing SEO techniques being used as such. Indeed, this was taken up because there was a shift in the kind of queries being asked. Instead of people asking for "Walmart stock price", people are asking Google to "navigate to the nearest Walmart" instead, because they're doing so not at their desktops at home, but walking down the street speaking these queries into their smartphones. And Google has coped with this magnificently.

"Okay Google, walk to the nearest metro station," I asked, and was immediately directed to the correct one out of the three fairly close options I had, the maximum difference being a couple of hundred meters or so. It was a pleasant surprise. With Google's flagship, the Nexus 6P, clearly focusing on aggressive battery management and having a larger capacity overall, the company is making life for a lot of power users a breeze. The more bought into the Android/Google ecosystem you are, the more seamless everything feels. Continuity and reliability were never an issue. In fact, in the past few years, with the advent of the wonderfully expressive and clean material design philosophy and a largely consistent and powerful NLP mechanism running behind the scenes of the classic white Google search bar, it has become a more personalised and, dare we say, more intuitive search engine than ever before.

Of course, Google's emphasis on original and helpful content has always remained its core advice to all websites, and Hummingbird was not focused on ranking down poor websites as such, but instead was more about walking in the shoes of the users to get at the meaning behind their questions.

Caught up in semantics: "Things, not strings"

In 2012, Google introduced a system of information organisation that they call their "Knowledge Graph" to the world. Searching can be thought of in two ways. One way is to ask where certain words can be found in a really

Using relationships between information on the internet and deciding which link is the most relevant one is a better approach than just matching words with pages. The latter is like searching for a needle in the world's biggest haystack, the former is just using a magnet.

large place. This way assumes that you will find your answer in a fixed place, and that it's only a question of looking as fast as possible through as much information as possible before you inevitably get to your solution.

The second way is to feed a few words to the search engine, which then relates those words to as many things as possible -- this may even be based on your own search history, location, and other information about you -- and based on which relations seem to make the most sense, the engine throws a few results at you. The combination of these results eventually gives you a clear picture of what you wanted to know about.

The latter is what is known as "semantic search". It's a concept that most search engines employ these days with the aim of prioritising context over direct meanings. It works by establishing relationships between entities about which information is available and using different weights for each edge of the graph, the most relevant information is identified and presented to you first.

Google's googleblog post dated 16th May 2012 explains this with the example of the Taj. You may be asking about the great Mughal monument, the chain of luxury hotels, or a local place whose biryani you just cannot get enough of. Knowledge Graph is, of course, a graph. Every bit of information that Google possesses is laid out in the form of a graph -- everything is connected. If your last navigation request was to the biryani place the previous
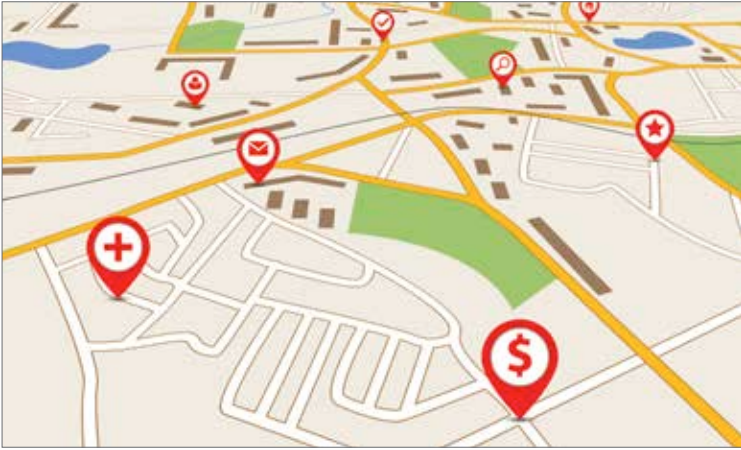
Pigeon wants to let you find places that are close to you, that are relevant to your location and that are simply more in line with what you had in mind.

night, Google will most likely assume that a query for Taj is currently more relevant to the eatery than the monument.

The impact of Knowledge Graph can be seen on the right pane of Google's search results. The brief summary, important details and related links like the "People also search for" section are all made possible by the contextual understanding of incredible amounts of data at Google's disposal.

Really close, as the Pigeon flies

2014's headline update saw Google boosting local listings in its search rankings. Pigeon naturally works closely with Maps, taking into account the user's location and the distances of the listings from them. The ranking parameters affected by these factors were improved, therefore the closer a place is to you, the more its weightage will be in its page rank.

In addition, Google added support for colloquialisms in addition to the conventional terms for say, places and food. Moreover, it integrated Pigeon with its Knowledge Graph, along with spell-check and synonyms and context, making it an extremely powerful tool to change the focus of searching from mere information traversal to a process of complex decision making.

Google also relaxed on its own reviews of places if the search queries specifically asked for online review websites such as Yelp and TripAdvisor, which reported an immediate impact in their search rankings when Pigeon was rolled out. **d**

SEO MYTHS AND FACTS

"We always fear what we don't understand." And when we don't understand, we lie. In this chapter we take a look at some of the most common misleading opinions floating around about SEO and related techniques.

S earch Engine Optimization (SEO) has come a long way since its birth, when the best way to optimise your website was to be the owner of the website that shouted the loudest. In its formative years, SEO had an "anything goes" feel about it, with spammy backlinking, going overboard with keywords, and often a grossly excessive amount of tags. Slower development cycles meant that it took several months for search engines to rollout updates to their search algorithms, and this meant that imperfect practices lasted much longer back then. Between the years 2000 and 2002, Google implemented just 2 updates to their Search Engine. In comparison, Google had 5 updates in 2015 alone, and has already rolled out 4 updates in 2016.

Search engines like Exact revolutionized search engines by cataloguing information back in 1993. Then came Yahoo and Google. They took it upon themselves to better index and optimise search results, and they succeeded. One of them, of course, did so in spectacular fashion and went on to become a truly global phenomenon that is arguably changing the world harder and faster than any other company in the world.

Here are the most common misconceptions in the world of SEO.

1) SEO techniques are frauds, and they don't work

No. Slow down. SEO is a legitimate way to increase the visibility of your website. The key is to avoid all "black-hat" practices -- cheap tricks that make you the bad guy on the Internet. And everyone hates a bad guy on the Internet.

The reason for this myth is the existence of innumerable companies that are devoted to scamming websites with false promises using a 'Pre-packaged SEO solution'. Back in the infancy of the Internet, it was possible to see long term results by "blasting" links pointing your website to thousands of others. Nowadays such practices are not just avoided, but aggressively penalized – Google might permanently stop your website from appearing in their search results, even if the query is full of keywords associated with your website. Beware also of services that promise manual submissions, and "guaranteed" number one ranking.

Instead, it's a good idea to do your research, and if you do want to purchase a service that does SEO, check to see if they are legitimate. If you don't hire a service, SEO is a simple enough thing to do if you follow the right habits -- value quality over quantity, promote your site using the plethora of social media available, and contribute to sites relevant to your subject

matter. SEOs work, and they'll continue to work as long as search engines are the masters of the Internet.

2) More links are better than more content

Link building is still an essential part of SEO. In fact, Searchmetrics, a company that sells SEO tools ranks it as the 4th most important criteria for success in optimization. It stands above Social Media Marketing, and just below Content, User Experience, and Technical.

There is an important caveat in these rankings, and it stems from the Panda and Penguin updates that Google made in 2013 (check Chapter 11 for more about those). The Panda update is basically a filter that is used to sort the wheat from the chaff – content quality wise – and then used as a parameter to punish the chaff. Similarly, Penguin sorts bad linking techniques and overuse of keywords. With these updates, the entire way of building links has changed, with an increased focus on quality, rather than quantity. If you have the resources to hire either a link building service, or a content writer, it is advisable to employ the latter solely because link builders seldom care about the quality of links. Having relevant and diverse links with quality content leads to guest posts on other websites, content for own websites, blogs and other entities, which increase the number of links over time.

A link-happy page is a bad, bad idea.

3) Ranking is all important, and SEOs won't lead to a #1 ranking

Let's start with the latter half first. With the correct use of high-quality original content, keywords, and smart backlinking, it is definitely possible. To build or improve your keyword strategy, you need look no further than Google AdWords, which gives great insights into what works and what doesn't. Another good way to improve your ranking is to focus on meta descriptors that you think would attract a large number of viewers.

Now for the fetishisation of ranking. A strong correlation, between result ranks and the traffic that the link gathers, does exist, and to an extent is inevitable. However, recent studies show that ranking is not the king of traffic, as it used to be. With meta descriptions and keywords gaining more prominence, search result ranking has taken a back seat. It has also been shown that users favour the top three listings on the first search page.

What is surprising is that subsequent pages show a similar number of clicks if the entries are at the top end of the page. There are several relevant causes here, chief amongst which is keyword strategy. Without a good strategy, you will end up ranking for irrelevant keywords. Also, attractive meta descriptions are a game changer if they appeal to your target audience.

If you're concerned about Google dismissing meta descriptions entirely when it comes to search rankings, and you would be right to do so. Here, it's important to bring out a crucial distinction between ranking and traffic. So ensure you have an attractive meta description, use the optimum keyword strategy, and stop worrying about the ranking you have.

4) SEO can be automated

We already talked about this when the legitimacy of SEOs was discussed, but it's necessary to go into detail. Such a misconception can cause you to hire a SEO service that will almost certainly defraud you.

One huge reason why SEOs can't be automated is that not all website traffic is the same. Firms that offer an automated, prepackaged SEO service often forget the crucial difference between the experimentation that a rookie does and the pre-tested path that a professional traverses. SEO agencies have to keep tweaking their strategies to continuously convert link visibility into link hits.

Another reason is that without a human element to this optimization, the difference between 'good' links and 'bad' links will remain unidentified. This will lead to the Penguin updates mentioned above simply removing the

bad ones which in turn will lead to a fall in all relevant traffic related aspects. The results that this SEO will give you will be temporary, and might have major long-term consequences. Google might even blacklist your website.

When the term SEO comes to mind, it is automatically associated with the technical sector – better in the hands of a laptop-wielding software developer than in the hands of a content writer. But with changing times, it is essential that your content is treated with as much importance as design is. In simpler words, it is wiser to first create desirable original content, and then use an IT guy to make sure it scores well on a technical scale as well.

5) Google doesn't value SEO

After reading all of the above, you have to realise how blatantly untrue this is. With a careful combination of all the good practices mentioned above, your website's Google search ranking will shoot up. Google uses an algorithm unknown to the public to determine where each website should rank in their search results. It reportedly uses over 200 variables to ascertain this ranking.

What you SHOULDN'T do while using SEO

An effective SEO strategy will have a careful balance between content and IT know-how. A combination of all these white hat practices will make for a much more optimised website.

Google has a dedicated Webmaster Guidelines support page, where it lists all the ways an SEO can illicitly increase page rank. Here are some of the most common don'ts. The punishments for these are harsh, and it is best avoided.

1) Keyword Stuffing

Ever encountered a link that said something like "The best books by best bookstore cheap home delivery dictionary"? If you see a link like this on your browser, would you ever consider clicking it? No. Even the most basic link analysing algorithms will detect this as spam, and might easily blacklist it. Instead, it is far more valuable to earn a single good link from a source that doesn't consider you a spammer.

2) Don't over-link

Over-linking is possibly the most popular way to spam, and is a tempting way to manipulate links so that it can (try to) fool the search engine's use of link popularity to determine ranking. There are many ways of doing this, including reciprocating links – where sites create links that lead to one another, in order to increase each other's popularity. Link farming is another way of doing this. This is where scores of low-value websites are made so that it increases the link's ranking.

Spam is constantly evolving and software engineers continue to battle it, updating algorithms to include a stricter and stricter norm, which means that if you are caught using such 'black hat' practices to improve the visibility of your website, chances are that it will eventually be taken down.

3) Don't buy links to promote your website

This practice stems from the previous one, as it involves contacting websites that are willing to place your link in exchange for money. These are usually part of bigger networks of link buying and selling, similar to a link farm. Google in particular, has taken very harsh action against such practices. Take for example, the time when Google banned Google Japan for ELEVEN MONTHS because it was found that they were buying links. JC Penny was banned for 3 months. Bing doesn't have any penalty against buying links, but they frown upon it.

4) Don't hide text

Text can be hidden in several ways on your webpage. Some of the easier ways is to change the colour of the text to the colour of the background,
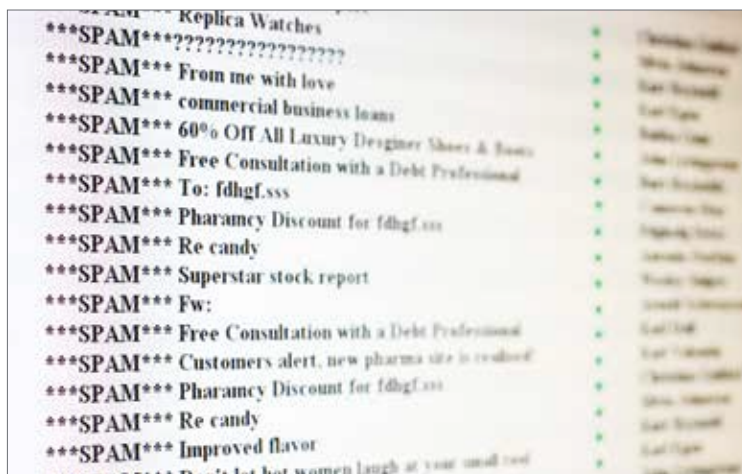
An increase in the number of keywords doesn't necessarily work in the long run.

locate text behind an image, position text off-screen, decrease font size so it is practically invisible. For someone with a working knowledge of HTML, a common way is to enclose everything within <div>, and then select Dev style to "display: none". All this and more can either be accidently or purposely done to improve your search ranking. However, this can very easily be found out.

5) Cloaking

This is a much more sophisticated way to 'hide' your website. It is also against the Webmaster Guidelines because it shows different content to the search engine and the user. For example, to the search engine it could show that it is a text rich website, while to the user it shows a flash rich website. A suitable tale of caution is that Google banned its own Google AdWords back in 2010 once it found that AdWords was cloaking.

Apart from these common don'ts, there are others that the Google Webmaster Manual warns us about. Practices such as sneakily redirecting a webpage, adding keywords that are irrelevant, sending automated queries to Google, phishing, installing malicious software like Trojans et al. Even having an excessive number of ads ala sites that host screenshots will get you in trouble. All in all, there are numerous white hat practices that can be used efficiently to speedily improve your search ranking and you should stick to them if you don't want to get into trouble. **d**