

SEARCH ENGINE OPTIMIZATION

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- SEO stands for “**search engine optimization.**” In simple terms, SEO means the process of **improving your website** to increase its visibility in **Google, Microsoft Bing**, and other search engines whenever people search for
 - Products you sell.
 - Services you provide.
 - Information on topics in which you have deep expertise and/or experience.

How is SEO different from SEM and PPC?

- SEO vs. SEM
- SEM stands for **search engine marketing** – or, as it is more commonly known, **search marketing**.
- Search marketing is a type of **digital marketing**. It is an umbrella term for the combination of **SEO and PPC** activities meant to drive traffic via organic search and paid search.
- Search marketing is the process of **gaining traffic and visibility from search engines** through both paid and unpaid efforts.

How is SEO different from SEM and PPC?

- SEO = driving **organic traffic** from search engines.
- SEM = driving **organic and paid traffic** from search engines.

SEO vs. PPC

SEO is also incredibly important because the **search engine results pages (or SERPs)** are super competitive – filled with search features (and PPC ads). SERP features include:

- ✓ Knowledge panels.
- ✓ Featured snippets.
- ✓ Maps.
- ✓ Images.
- ✓ Videos.
- ✓ Top stories (news).
- ✓ People Also Ask.
- ✓ Carousels.

- SEO is the foundation of holistic marketing, where **everything** your company does matters.
- Once you understand what your users want, you can then implement that knowledge across your
 - Campaigns (paid and organic).
 - Website content.
 - Social media properties.

Types of SEO

- **Technical SEO:** Optimizing the **technical aspects** of a website.
- **On-site SEO:** Optimizing the **content on a website** for users and search engines.
- **Off-site SEO:** Creating brand assets (e.g., people, marks, values, vision, slogans, catchphrases, colors) and doing things that will ultimately enhance brand awareness and recognition (i.e., demonstrating and growing its expertise, authority and trustworthiness) and demand generation.

Technical optimization

- Optimizing the technical elements of a website is crucial and fundamental for SEO success.
- It all starts with **architecture** – creating a website that can be **crawled and indexed** by search engines.

Content optimization

- In SEO, your content needs to be optimized for two primary audiences:
 - **people and search engines.**
- The goal, always, is to publish helpful, high-quality content.

When optimizing content for people, you should make sure it:

- Covers relevant topics with which you have experience or expertise.
- Includes keywords people would use to find the content.
- Is unique or original.
- Is well-written and free of grammatical and spelling errors.
- Is up to date, containing accurate information.
- Includes multimedia (e.g., images, videos).
- Is better than your SERP competitors.
- Is readable – structured to make it easy for people to understand the information you're sharing (think: subheadings, paragraph length, use bolding/italics, ordered/unordered lists, reading level, etc.).

For search engines, some key content elements to optimize for are:

- Title tags
- Meta description
- Header tags (H1-H6)
- Image alt text
- Open graph and Twitter Cards metadata

Off-site optimization

- There are several activities that may not be “SEO” in the strictest sense, but nonetheless can align with and help contribute indirectly to SEO success.
- **Brand building and brand marketing:** Techniques designed to boost recognition and reputation.
- **PR:** Public relations techniques designed to earn editorially-given links.
- **Content marketing:** Some popular forms include creating videos, ebooks, research studies, podcasts (or being a guest on other podcasts) and guest posting (or guest blogging).
- **Social media marketing and optimization:** Claim your brand’s handle on any and all relevant platforms, optimize it fully and share relevant content.
- **Listing management:** Claiming, verifying and optimizing the information on any platforms where information about your company or website may be listed and found by searchers (e.g., directories, review sites, wikis).
- **Ratings and reviews:** Getting them, monitoring them and responding to them.

SEO specialties

- **Ecommerce SEO:** Additional SEO elements include optimizing category pages, product pages, faceted navigation, internal linking structures, product images, product reviews, schema and more.
- **Enterprise SEO:** This is SEO on a massive scale. Typically this means dealing with a website (or multiple websites/brands) with 1 million+ pages – or it may be based on the size of the organization (typically those making millions or billions in revenue per year). Doing enterprise also typically means delays trying to get SEO changes implemented by the dev team, as well as the involvement of multiple stakeholders.
- **International SEO:** This is global SEO for international businesses – doing SEO for multiregional or multilingual websites – and optimizing for international search engines such as Baidu or Naver.

- **Local SEO:** Here, the goal is to optimize websites for visibility in local organic search engine results by managing and obtaining reviews and business listings, among others.
- **News SEO:** With news, speed is of utmost importance – specifically making sure you get into Google's index as quickly as possible and appear in places such as Google Discover, Google's Top Stories and Google News. There's a need to understand best practices for paywalls, section pages, news-specific structured data, and more.

How does SEO work?

SEO really works through a combination of :

- **People:** The person or team responsible for doing or ensuring that the strategic, tactical and operational SEO work is completed.
- **Processes:** The actions taken to make the work more efficient.
- **Technology:** The platforms and tools used.
- **Activities:** The end product, or output.

Understanding how search engines work

- **Crawling:** Search engines use crawlers to discover pages on the web by following links and using sitemaps.
- **Rendering:** Search engines generate how the page will look using HTML, JavaScript and CSS information.
- **Indexing:** Search engines analyze the content and metadata of the pages it has discovered and add them to a database (though there's no guarantee every page on your website will be indexed).
- **Ranking:** Complex algorithms look at a variety of signals to determine whether a page is relevant and of high-enough quality to show when searchers enter a query.

Researching

Research is a key part of SEO. Some forms of research that will improve SEO performance include:

- **Audience research:** It's important to understand your target audience or market. Who are they (i.e., their demographics and psychographics)? What are their pain points? What questions do they have that you can answer?
- **Keyword research:** This process helps you identify and incorporate relevant and valuable search terms people use into your pages – and understand how much demand and competition there is to rank for these keywords.

- **Competitor research:** What are your competitors doing? What are their strengths and weaknesses? What types of content are they publishing?
- **Brand/business/client research:** What are their goals – and how can SEO help them achieve those goals?
- **Website research:** A variety of SEO audits can uncover opportunities and issues on a website that are preventing success in organic search. Some audits to consider: technical SEO, content, link profile and E-E-A-T.
- **SERP analysis:** This will help you understand the search intent for a given query (e.g., is it commercial, transactional, informational or navigational) and create content that is more likely to earn rankings or visibility.

Planning

- Setting goals (e.g., OKRs, SMART) and expectations (i.e., timelines/milestones).
- Defining and aligning meaningful KPIs and metrics.
- Deciding how projects will be created and implemented (internal, external or a mix).
- Coordinating and communicating with internal and external stakeholders.

Planning

- Choosing and implementing tools/technology.
- Hiring, training and structuring a team.
- Setting a budget.
- Measuring and reporting on results.
- Documenting the strategy and process.

Creating and implementing

- **Creating new content:** Advising your content team on what content needs to be created.
- **Recommending or implementing changes or enhancements to existing pages:** This could include updating and improving the content, adding internal links, incorporating keywords/topics/entities, or identifying other ways to optimize it further.
- **Removing old, outdated or low-quality content:** The types of content that aren't ranking well, driving converting traffic or helping you achieve your SEO goals.

Monitoring and maintaining

- Monitoring is critical.
- Traffic drops to a critical page, pages become slow, unresponsive or fall out of the index, your entire website goes offline, links break, or any other number of potential catastrophic issues.

Analyzing, assessing and reporting on performance

- **Website analytics:** Set up and use tools (at minimum, free tools such as Google Analytics, Google Search Console and Bing Webmaster Tools) to collect performance data.
- **Tools and platforms:** There are many “all-in-one” platforms (or suites) that offer multiple tools, but you can also choose to use only select SEO tools to track performance on specific tasks. Or, if you have the resources and none of the tools on the market do exactly what you want, you can make your own tools.