

Search Engine Optimization (SEO)

Meaning

SEO is short for search engine optimization. Search engine optimization is a methodology of strategies, techniques and tactics used to increase the amount of visitors (traffic) to a website by obtaining a high-ranking placement in the search results page of a search engine (SERP) — including Google, Bing, Yahoo and other search engines.

SEO is an acronym that stands for search engine optimization, which is the process of optimizing your website to get organic, or un-paid, traffic from the search engine results page.

In other words, SEO involves making certain changes to your website design and content that make your site more attractive to a search engine. You do this in hopes that the search engine will display your website as a top result on the search engine results page.

Though search engine optimization can get quite complex when it comes to all the different factors that impact your ranking, the basic process is not as difficult to understand.

Search engines want to provide the best service for their users. This means delivering results on the search engine pages that are not only high quality but also relevant to what the searcher is looking for.

In order to do this, search engines will scan, or crawl, different websites to better understand what the site is about. This helps them deliver more relevant results to those who are searching for certain topics or keywords.

Similarly, the search engines will scan the site to determine how easy it is to navigate and read, rewarding user-friendly sites with higher rankings on the search engine results page.

SEO is the process that organizations go through to help make sure that their site ranks high in the search engines for relevant keywords and phrases. For instance, let's say that you have an article about how to build a birdhouse.

In order to get your content in front of the right people, you want to try to optimize your this blog post so that it will show up as a top result for anyone who searches for the phrase “build a birdhouse.”

There are many benefits of SEO for your business. By improving your SEO, you can work to expand your visibility on the search engines. This helps you reach and engage more potential customers. By creating more engaging and effective SEO-focused content, you can increase your chances of bringing in more targeted organic traffic.

Google Business Page SEO

When describing SEO tactics as “on-page” or “off-page”, the term “page” has always referred to your website pages. But did you know that there is also SEO work to be done for your Google My Business page? More commonly known as your Google My Business profile, this online asset for your business is becoming just as—if not more—important than your website. Your Google My Business profile is what allows your business to appear in Google Maps searches, to have a Knowledge Panel (the right-side info panel that appears if you search your business name and location), as well as to appear in the local section of regular Google Search. Just as with your website pages, there are on-page and off-page practices you can employ to get your Google business page ranking higher and attracting more customers.

On-Page Google My Business SEO

Here’s what you can do directly to your Google My Business page to optimize it for search engine success:

- Provide all contact information (name, website, phone number, address, hours of operation)
- Select a category (so you can show up for non-branded searches)
- Indicate your attributes (specific accommodations and details about your business based on your category)
- Include a description (make sure to use terms your potential customers would use when searching for the products and services you provide)

- Seed your Q&A section to clear up uncertainty for potential customers and highlight your best features

Off-Page Google My Business SEO

The one element of your Google My Business page that you can't manipulate is your customer review section. However, you can strategize around obtaining more Google reviews. Here's how:

- Provide outstanding service and a review-worthy experience
- Ask customers to leave reviews
- Respond to all reviews, positive and negative.
- Make it easy for customers to get to the review section of your Google My Business page

Factors That Impact SEO

1. A Secure and Accessible Website

Unsurprisingly, the first of our SEO ranking factors has to do with having the right kind of URL. Specifically, that's a URL that Google's bots can easily reach and crawl.

In other words, Google has to be able to visit the URL and look at the page content to start to understand what that page is about. To help the bots out, you'll need:

- A website created with a well-coded website builder
- A robots.txt file that tells Google where it can and can't look for your site information
- A sitemap, which lists all your pages. If you're running a Word Press site, you can set up a sitemap via Yoast SEO. If not, then you can use an online sitemap generator.

2. Page Speed (Including Mobile Page Speed)

Page speed has been cited as one of the main SEO ranking factors for years. Google wants to improve users' experience of the web, and fast-loading web pages will definitely do that.

Google announced a search engine algorithm update focused on mobile page speed that will start to affect sites from July 2018. If your site doesn't load fast on mobile devices, then it could be penalized.

Use Google's mobile testing tool to see how your site stacks up.

And, if you're using Word Press, check out these tips for speeding up a Word Press site from WP Beginner.

3. Mobile Friendliness

While we're on the subject of mobile, mobile-friendliness is another major SEO ranking factor. More people use mobile devices than desktops to access the web, and that's one reason there've been changes in how Google ranks search results.

Google's mobile-first index is now a reality, which means it's drawing its results from mobile-optimized sites first, rather than sites geared to desktop computers. If your site isn't mobile-optimized you risk being out in the cold, in SEO terms at least.

Many of the SEO ranking factors we'll look at in this article will help you lay the foundation for a good search engine ranking, but you also have to look after user experience when people land on your site.

4. Optimized Content

We've talked a lot about content in this guide to Google SEO ranking factors. That's because it's one of the most important search ranking factors (right up there with user experience, links, and Rank Brain, which we'll get to in a while). Now let's dig down and see what optimizing content for SEO really means.

As we said in our keyword research guide, Google's search algorithm relies on keywords. These are the words and phrases searchers use when they're looking for information. They're also the words and phrases that describe the topics your site is about. Ideally, those will match up.

That's why it's so important to use keywords in your content.

One negative SEO ranking factor to be aware of is duplicate content. For SEO, fresh, original content is always best. And if you do have content that's similar, tell Google which one should be ranked as most authoritative by using canonical URLs.

5. Technical SEO

We said earlier that getting the code right is one aspect of optimizing content for better search engine rankings. Here are some of the aspects you need to look at:

- Use keyword phrases in page titles, which is where Google first looks to determine which content is relevant to which search. You'll see the page title as the first line of a search result entry.
- Use header tags to show content hierarchy. If your title is formatted as h1, then use h2 or h3 for subheads.
- Create a meta description that both entices readers and includes your keyword phrase. Keep meta descriptions short and grabby – you have right around 160 characters to convince searchers that this is the post they want.
- Use keyword phrases in image alt tags to show how the images are relevant to the main content. Google also has an image search, which is another way for people to find your content.
- Where it's appropriate, use schema markup to tell Google what kind of content you're producing. This can also help your content appear in rich card entries other than answer boxes.

6. User Experience

For a while now, Google's been using artificial intelligence to better rank web pages. It calls that signal Rank Brain. This includes other signals that affect your search engine ranking. These are:

- **Click through rate** – the percentage of people who click to visit your site after an entry comes up in search results

- **Bounce rate**, especially pogo sticking – the number of people who bounce away again, which basically means your site didn't give them what they wanted
- **Dwell time** – how long they stay on your site after they've arrived.

If people land on your site, don't like it, and bounce away, then Google will think it's not relevant to their needs. If enough people do this, then you might find it more difficult for your site to rank higher in search results.

In contrast, if people click through to your web page and stick around for a while, that tells Google your content is relevant to their search.

So when you optimize titles, descriptions, and content to get the clicks and deliver value on the other end, you can boost your search engine ranking.

7. Links

As we said at the start, the web is built on links, so naturally, links are a crucial SEO ranking signal. There are three kinds of links to think about:

- Inbound links
- Outbound links
- Internal links

Google uses inbound links as one way to help determine how authoritative and relevant your content is.

The best case scenario is where an authoritative site includes a relevant link to your site in a relevant piece of their content. So, if the Content Marketing Institute includes a link to your content marketing resource, that'll be perceived better than if a random person with a low quality site links to it.

Ideally, you want to have very few inbound links from low-quality domains. You can find your inbound links using a tool like SEM Rush or one of the keyword research tools shared earlier in this guide.

At the same time, you want to show that you're creating quality content for your visitors and linking to relevant, authoritative sites in your niche is a good thing.

Finally, linking to your own content can help tie pages together for both Google and your visitors, making each page more valuable. If you have an authoritative page and link to another page on your site that helps visitors find the other page and passes on some of that authority. That will help that second page boost its search engine ranking.

Advantages of SEO

1. Free

SEO is totally free of cost, and it depends on how much time you spend researching keywords and utilizing them in your high-quality content.

2. Localized Traffic

Using local SEO tools such as Google My Business can help you improve your localized traffic.

3. Mobile Friendly

Good SEO means your site is responsive, your site speed is good, and there's no latency for mobile users.

4. Expert Status

Following best SEO practices means your site is an authority. You only have one article per keyword, and you only have back links from high-quality sites.

5. Customer Friendly

Potential customers find your site because of your SEO. They come to your site and see that you're professional. There are no grammatical errors in your content. You're using the latest technology on a secure site, and they only need to locate the buy button.

Disadvantages of SEO

1. Targeted by Competitors

Effective SEO means you rank high. Sites that rank high are targeted by competitors who want a slice of the SEO pie, which means you're always on your toes.

2. Changes

SEO can change. Just say the word "panda" and watch business owners frown. One small change to SEO and you can be at the top of the search results one day and the next day find your site greatly demoted.

3. Penalties

You need to always be on top of your game, which may require some financial investment. One example is websites that haven't been upgraded to responsive design will be penalized.

4. Slow Results

SEO isn't a fast-moving process. You can update your site and use best practices and not see results for months.

5. No Promises

You could update all your content and website features and still not find that your site has improved. SEO doesn't promise results.

When you're looking for ways to boost your site's rank, make sure to work with professionals who have expertise in SEO. In San Diego, businesses know they can rely on the experience and know-how of the SEO pros at Saba SEO to help them increase rank, build their customer base, and grow revenue.