

SEO



SEARCH ENGINE
OPTIMIZATION
FUNDAMENTALS

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SEO: Search Engine Optimization Fundamentals

Title: SEO: Search Engine Optimization Fundamentals
Course material - knowledge required - for certification
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1

Introduction

1. Introduction

The book you are about to read deals with the topic of search engine optimization and everything related to understanding it – from how search engines do what they do, to how you can use them to promote a business or website and incorporate SEO into a marketing strategy.

We will start with looking at what search engine optimization is in a nutshell, what it has to offer to the webmaster of a website and what are the common SEO techniques being used.

People are the key to the internet, as the internet is supported by the development of content from the global community and is used by the same community in the form of search engines. And that is why we will be looking at how people use search engines.

Further on in this book, we will be explain to you how to make a website that is search engine friendly and makes the most out of SEO and SEM techniques. This includes understanding what search engines love and respond well to, how search engine algorithms work and how they create rankings. We will be talking about tools used for link building, keyword research, and analysis tools, to equip you with the skills necessary for analyzing a website and optimizing in relation to the most effective keywords that generate traffic and respond well to what is trending on the internet.

In the last chapter, we will be offering a conclusion that sums up the topic of search engine optimization, search engine marketing, the tools discussed and what the world of SEO has to offer to any business, organization or individual wishing to make a greater online presence.

2

Introduction to Search Engine Optimization

2. Introduction to Search Engine Optimization

What is SEO?

SEO or Search Engine Optimization is the process or science (and sometimes an art in itself) of maximizing the visibility of websites in search engines, in the results they generate and getting the optimum level of relevant traffic directed to one's site, thus the word optimization is used. This involves a lot more than one would have guessed, from the way that a site is structured, the manner in which it connects to other websites, to the words used in the main areas of the website.

It is common knowledge and now statistically proven that the higher up or earlier a website appears on a search engines results page, the more traffic it is likely to get from the users of that search engine. The second factor to influence traffic is frequency of appearance on the results page, or how many times a certain website appears on a search engine's results page. The primary or basic goal of search engine optimization is to maximize both these aspects of appearance to direct more traffic towards a website from a search engine.

Search engines use internet bots called 'crawlers' or 'spiders' to index websites on the World Wide Web and keep their indexes updated. This process is called crawling or to put it in easier terms, crawling is the process of reading and cataloguing websites on the internet. In collaboration with these spiders, algorithms are written to generate results from the indexes created by these internet spiders. The process or methods through which, firstly, a website is made easier to index for a search engine's spiders and secondly, made as responsive as possible to the algorithms of search engine, is what a large part of search engine optimization is all about.

Remember, SEO deals with improving the 'organic' or 'natural' results that a search engine generates for one's website. Organic here means that the results are not optimized through paying the search engine as is done in ad based optimization to get paid or sponsored results, which involves different set of strategies or tactics, as well as payment. That is another search engine marketing methodology altogether.

The image shows a Google search interface for the query "guitar lessons". The search bar at the top contains the text "guitar lessons" and a search icon. Below the search bar, there are navigation tabs for "Web", "Videos", "Images", "Maps", "Books", "More", and "Search tools". The "Web" tab is selected. Below the tabs, it says "About 17,000,000 results (0.28 seconds)".

The search results are divided into two sections:

- Paid results:** A green box labeled "Paid results" with an arrow pointing to the first two results. The first result is "Learn to play music now - Contact us for affordable lessons" from www.themusicianship.org/, with a subtext "Piano, Guitar, Drums and more.". The second result is "Play Drums Now - Learn Gospel Music Online" from www.gospelchopsfoundation.org/, with a subtext "Free Music Lessons. Drum Videos. Blog."
- Natural results:** A green box labeled "Natural results" with an arrow pointing to the last two results. The third result is "Guitar Lessons - Free HD Video Guitar Lessons Online" from www.guitarlessons.com/, with a subtext "Free online guitar lessons for beginners and experienced guitarists. The step-by-step videos include beginner guitar lessons, blues guitar lessons, and much ...". The fourth result is "Justin Guitar | Free Guitar Lessons" from www.justinguitar.com/, with a subtext "There are many hundreds of free guitar lessons here and as you can imagine it's taken quite a lot of work and over 10 years for me to put it all together."

Before we move on towards understanding how SEO achieves the above mentioned objectives for a website, let us look into a more basic question – why does a website need SEO to begin with?

Why it matters?

Although it is possible and necessary to generate traffic, get recognition and build interest for your website through social media, advertising and other forms of traffic to attract visitors to a website, search engines are the backbone of any website's publicity and visibility. This is due to two major reasons.

Firstly, search engines are the virtual highways through which the majority of internet traffic flows and finds its destinations. According to Forbes magazine, at the end of 2013 Google made up 40% of all internet traffic. And that is just Google alone. So if a website is not doing well in its relationship with search engines, it is literally missing out on the majority of the traffic found on the internet.

Secondly, an essential quality of search engines is their ability to generate and direct *targeted traffic* towards a website – in easier words, visitors who are interested in exactly what a certain

website has to offer. These targeted visitors, that a search engine provides a website, are an indispensable component of success on the web and the growth of a website, since they can be (and mostly are) a single major source of publicity, exposure and revenue to a degree that no form of marketing can ever compensate for. Thus, investing in SEO is crucial to the prosperity of any internet venture due to stakes involved.

Common SEO techniques

Search engine optimization is not entirely made up of complex methods involving the understanding of algorithms and the anatomy of the internet. A large portion of it is made up of easy to use (or at least understand) techniques which can be used by the internet-savant and average webmaster alike.

Before we go on you have to understand that SEO is a part of search engine marketing (SEM), which is made up from SEO and paid advertising, SEO being natural or organic reach and paid advertising using paid reach to increase visibility of a website. These two at times overlap and intertwine, as they ultimately have the same goal, but they do use different techniques to achieve this goal.

When it comes to SEO, you have to differentiate between on-page and off-page SEO. Both of these are inseparable part of search engine optimization, but the difference is where you apply SEO techniques. On-page optimization includes optimization of elements on the page itself, meaning optimizing a website according to the SEO guidelines. On the other hand, off-page SEO requires usage of different techniques in the purpose of optimizing a website using external elements, which mostly includes link building and nurturing the reputation of your website.

SEO techniques are classified in many ways, but one classification is of a legal or procedural nature. And that is of blackhat SEO versus whitehat SEO with greyhat SEO being a no-man's land of sorts between the two.

Blackhat SEO consists of techniques, which are disapproved of by search engines and in some cases not tolerated, to the point that they can lead to a website being penalized, which means losing ranking or being completely removed from the search engine results. They all have one thing in common, which is the fact that they revolve around deceiving or tricking the search engine and its algorithms into producing higher rankings and better results for the website. They are not geared towards creating better content and developing a committed user base or content visitors. They are concerned with climbing to the top of the search results page through tricks. An example of blackhat SEO is the use of the same color for background and a body of text hidden in it.

And so another obvious and inevitable characteristic is that blackhat SEO is usually a short term enterprise and also results in short term gains, whereas as whitehat SEO results are long-lasting and centered around creating better content and serving and building a broader user base. Whitehat SEO can be defined as optimization done within the guidelines set by the search engine.

The following is an elaborative list of commonly employed SEO techniques:

- Making the website abundant in keyword-rich text and key phrases to anticipate as many search queries as possible. It includes the addition of relevant keywords to the metatags of the website.
- Creating dense and unique title tags for every page. It helps search engines understand the contents of a page by providing them a quick reference.
- The creation of media content such as press clippings, e-zines or newsletters to maintain a threshold of inbound links.
- Maintaining the search engine saturation at an optimum level and making regular comparisons with competitor websites. (Search engine saturation is a term denoting the quantity of pages of website that have been indexed by search engines. It is a measure of how efficient optimization efforts have been and are a good marker of the site's visibility and accessibility.)
- Using online resources such as [Google Trends](#) and [Google Analytics](#) to understand current online behaviors and patterns in context of what is trending.
- Varying search phrases and employing them in the first 100 words of content.
- Employing a backlink from a web directory.
- The use of canonical metatag or 301 directs to achieve URL normalization in case of multi URL webpages.
- Crosslink between pages of the same site.
- Providing greater number of links to the main pages of the website.
- Using other websites to link back to the original.
- Employing a mixture of keywords and keyphrases in conjunction with brand/business being promoted.

Content creation as an SEO technique

In addition to these techniques, the base of whitehat SEO is in content creation. No website can hope to even minimally prosper without content that is of value, relevance, novelty and some element of uniqueness. All these elements need to come together in a body of content that can easily be scanned, since visitors are going to come towards detailed reading and viewing after an initial scan. White hat SEOs rely heavily on what is called *linkbait*, the technique where content is created with the objective of being shared on a massive scale with the expectation of earning backlinks.

The modern SEO revolves around the users, thus content has a major role in SEO. Creating outstanding content will help you attract the users, which will also be a signal to search engines that your site provides value, thus improving ranking of your website.

The last category to be mentioned in this section is that of greyhat SEO, which exists on a kind of boundary between blackhat and whitehat SEO. These are SEO techniques which carry a risk of being disapproved and penalized by search engines but are technically not against the guidelines and parameters set by search engines. A common example of greyhat SEO is the creation of microsites which are owned by the same webmaster, and then linked back to the parent site which is the intended beneficiary of the optimization.

SEO as a marketing strategy

One of the most important uses of SEO is its employment as a marketing strategy for businesses and entrepreneurs. Having better visibility and rankings on search engines can make all the difference in the success of a business when it comes to getting ahead and having an edge in today's competitive market, on the internet. A simple way to understand this is to think of the internet as a network of roads and the search engines being the main highways through which drivers navigate their route and discover places that have something to offer them. The search results on say Google or Yahoo! are like sign posts on a highway – they show you what is where and give you access to places you might not even know existed.

There is an old problem in philosophy, which goes something like this: If a tree falls in a forest and no one is there to hear it, does it still make a sound? This relates to marketing on the internet in a surprisingly relevant manner. An entrepreneur could create a very attractive, relevant and user-friendly website offering content that is even in demand. But if there is no way for consumers (in this case users) to know about it and find access to it, it is like that proverbial tree which falls in a forest without making a sound. Thus, when it comes to e-commerce, traffic is the currency of a business's success on the web.

The more people find your page, the more they are likely to become frequent visitors and convert into consumers of whatever your website has to offer, whether it is a service or a product or whether you are simply selling information.

Search engine optimization is a way to enhance your relationship with search engines, to be seen as much as possible. Using our previous metaphor, it means to make as much sound as possible. Investing in SEO is quickly becoming an integral part of the marketing strategy of businesses, groups and individuals alongside other methods, which take up the bulk of the marketing budget, such as advertisements, endorsements, social media marketing etc. The reason for this is very simple – experience. Investment in SEO pays off and businesses/organizations witness significant results popularity and revenue after making SEO a part of their marketing strategy.

However, there is a downside to too much reliance on SEO for generating traffic and revenue, since search engines are in a constant process of altering their algorithms, and evolving their system of crawling and ranking. This is the reason why SEO, when used as a marketing tool, turns out to be an endeavor requiring constant vigilance and analysis. But the pros far outnumber the cons, which is why statistics and trends in e-commerce are starting to bear testimony to the effectiveness of SEO as a marketing tool.

For example, 2012 saw the Indian online market pass the \$150 million mark, with search engine marketing owning half of that market share. This shows what an important source of attracting consumers the search engine arena has become. So a website that is not optimized for performing well in search engines is losing half of its potential traffic already.

Essentially, search engine optimization is a part of internet marketing, and as such it overlaps with other forms of internet marketing, such as paid advertising and social media marketing. For example, when it comes to paid advertising, SEO helps you create landing page that will affect the outcome of paid advertising. When it comes to social media marketing, it is said that social media send so-called social signals that might affect search engines when determining ranking. Even though this might be the case, what we know for sure is that when you use a search engine to look up a certain query, you will see the results from social networking websites, especially if those are popular accounts with lots of activity and lots of followers. Therefore, you will frequently see the results from Wikipedia, Facebook, Twitter and other social networks ranked high in the search result page, which supports the fact that social media marketing can also help you improve visibility of the website on the internet, fulfilling the same goal as SEO.

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3

Understanding Search Engines

3. Understanding Search Engines

How do search engines work?

Although search engines are basically just navigators of the internet, it would be impossible to imagine the internet without them. Due to the sheer size and depth of the World Wide Web, this very wealth of information becomes meaningless or unusable without search engines. Search engines basically perform three tasks:

- 1) They search the World Wide Web using specific words or phrases.
- 2) They index the results they find and their locations.
- 3) They provide a user access to this index and the ability to search it using combinations of words or phrases of their choosing.

Today search engines perform up to ten million queries every given day and are constantly in a process of evolving and reinventing their services to balance the needs of websites, users, and advertisers.

It all starts with something called **spiders** (also called crawlers) and how appropriate, having in mind that the internet is called the World Wide Web. Spiders are inter-bots or robots composed of software or coding. Just like real spiders, internet spiders do something called webcrawling or just crawling, to make huge lists of what is found where on the internet. Crawling is the act of browsing, indexing and copying done by spiders. They start with a heavily used server or popular website (a busy part of the web) and crawl their way outwards to every link found on that website or server, behaving pretty much like real spiders in the way they spread.

Interesting fact: Google started out with just four spiders who would read 600 kilobytes per second, a laughable figure for today. This shows us how much the World Wide Web has grown.

Although Google was the first to come up with spiders, their use has spread across the search engine community and the quest to make newer, faster and more creative spiders is always on.

Spiders perform indexing of everything they 'read', using, among other things, something called metatags which are the descriptions of the keywords or phrases under which the website owner would like his or her website to be indexed. They help the spiders understand what the page is about and where it belongs in an index. Webmasters might use words or descriptions in the metatags which are inaccurate or reference popular topics and keywords which their site

might not deal with. To protect against this, spiders are designed to correlate the metatags with the content found on the website and come up with their own understanding of where the page belongs on an index.

The next big organ in the anatomy of a search engine is the algorithms it uses. Algorithms are computer coding or rather software that is designed to take the words you put into the search bar and provide you with the most relevant results from the indexes that the spiders have made. They are the 'answer-makers' that make a search engine an answering machine. They depend on signals or clues from the websites that are indexed to come up with rankings of search results.

These signals vary from how fresh the content on a website is, to how much it has been visited recently and the region that the user asking the question belongs to. Google alone is known to use around 200 kinds of signals in helping its algorithms create search listings every time you press that 'search' button on your computer.

How do people interact with search engines?

The key to designing and improving any product or service is to understand the human end of it or how real people interact with it. The best way to design better car interiors, for example, is to understand how people interact and use the interiors of their cars. Similarly, if one is to design a marketing strategy geared around SEO and search engine marketing, it begins with understanding how people interact with search engines. You can only give users what they want if you know what they want, what they are already getting and how you can improve it.

Search engine facts and figures

Let us start by understanding some basic facts and figures about search engines and people, so that we know where we stand today. As of 2011, 59% of internet users make use of a search engine every day, which is just within an inch of the most widely used internet application to date – email, which stands at 61% of users every single day. This shows how the reliance and dominance of search engine activity over other internet activities is growing. Google happens to hold the highest market share, as a report by StatsCounter shows, with 90.62% of traffic being sent worldwide by the giant, followed by Yahoo!'s 3.78% and Bing's 3.72%

Studies by UserCentric clearly demonstrate that users pay more attention to the organic results as opposed to the paid or sponsored results, and they are much more likely to click through to organic results than sponsored results. However, interestingly enough, sponsored results and

advertisements receive equal and in some cases more attention when they appear above the organic results.

Another finding that the same study made was that users pay little attention to what is contained at the bottom of the page compared to what is contained at the top. Similarly, the keywords and descriptions that are texted in bold letters receive significantly more attention and click through rates when compared to simple text, especially if it is found further down the page.

The queries that users make on search engines can typically be divided into three categories:

- Action searches or 'Do' queries – e.g. Convert dollars to Euros or download a file.
- Navigation searches or 'Go' queries – e.g. Users looking for a particular website like a band's fan page or news website.
- Information searches or 'Know' queries – e.g. What year did the French Revolution start?

In addition to these queries, with the overwhelming advent of e-commerce, a further fourth category can be made which can be called:

- Commercial searches or 'Buy and Sell' queries – e.g. Buy used iPhone 4 or sell a car.

Search engine marketing

Search engine marketing or SEM is a type of internet marketing concerned with promoting websites and increasing their visibility or Search Engine Results Pages (SERP) by either optimizing the content and structure of the websites themselves and how they respond to search engines, or by using advertising and purchasing sponsored results. The end goal is to get higher rankings in search result pages, achieve better visibility and gain more new traffic whilst retaining old users. It has become a huge market in itself – In North America alone, with \$19 billion spent by internet advertisers in 2012.

Google AdWords, Baidu and Bing Ads are the biggest vendors of search engine marketing online. Advertising agencies have begun to specialize in SEM as it was the fastest growing form of internet marketing and even overtook some traditional forms of advertising. Although most campaigns are carried out through vendors and agencies, self-serve solutions and SEM tools are also available online. The term SEM has come to cover the wide range of search engine related marketing activities that include the management of sponsored listings at search engines, the

submission of websites to directories and the designing of marketing strategies for businesses, individuals and organizations that operate through the web.

Search engine marketing includes:

- Organic or natural results – These results are improved through the process of search engine optimization, which is the topic of this book.
- Paid results – In this case advertising programs are used to promote the website in the search engine result pages.

Therefore, search engine marketing includes a series of tasks through which the website can be promoted, regardless if those are organic or paid results. Here are some of the most important tasks in this process.

1) Keyword analysis

This involves analyzing keywords to discover the relevant keywords, which generate the most traffic for one's product or service. – e.g. The decision to use the keyword studio apartment or studio flats will be made on basis of analyzing keyword activity and how they are trending on the internet.

2) Site popularity

This is a measure of the weight or presence, that a website carries on different search engines. It is measured by something we mentioned earlier above called search engine saturation, which is an indicator of how much of a particular website has been indexed by spiders and the amount of backlinks that a website has.

3) Web analytic and HTML tools

This has to do with the backend of the website, or the part that is relatively invisible to the users. It ranges from web analytics tools that measure, analyze and log file analyzers to complicated ones like pagetagging, which uses a JavaScript or an image to follow the actions of a user on a page. HTML validators and spider-simulators are tools that optimize the hidden areas of a site for possible issues and those relating to usability. They make sure that a page conforms to W3C code standards.

4) Sponsored results

This has to do with buying advertisements or buying places on search engine pages to get higher up views in the sponsored results section and typically involving Pay-Per-Click (PPC) solutions offered by search engines.

Why search engine marketing matters?

The internet gives e-commerce a unique quality over other traditional forms of business and that is the way it is centered on creative, new and entertaining webcontent and low start up costs. It only takes a great idea and a little money to start earning money on the internet.

The key to having a successful internet business is attracting more and more visitors to one's website and that can only happen with great content that is made as accessible as possible to as wide a population of users as possible. All internet businesses and websites are always struggling for maximum visibility.

Here is why SEM matters so much nowadays.

Firstly, everyone uses search engines, as we have talked about earlier, to such an extent that it is quickly becoming the most popular activity on the internet. That makes it the prime battleground for the attention and resources of internet users. SEM is what takes your website out of your hands and in front of the eyes of the largest internet community – search engine users.

Internet users have become accustomed to not thinking of a website or business as legitimate unless it shows up on search engines. A website cannot expect to have the legitimacy factor unless it is engaged in SEM and visibility on search engines.

SEM allows you the freedom to do whatever you wish with your page since your website can become self-supporting through the revenue generated by traffic. You do not even have to sell anything. You could run a blog or a website about a topic or provide any service you wish without worrying about supporting the website.

SEM and SEO are the forms of advertising that are available to everyone, and you use them to promote your website on your own, or you can hire an agency or professional to assist you in this endeavor. The marketing and optimization perpetuates itself if done properly and regularly enough, as long as your content remains on the web in some location.

Lastly, and this might be an awful reason but it is an important one, if you are an internet business, organization, interest group or public individual, you can be sure that all your competitors will be involved in SEM and SEO. So any hopes of survival in today's aggressive internet arena cannot be entertained without thorough work regarding SEM.

4

Search Engine Friendly Site Design and Development

4. Search Engine Friendly Site Design and Development

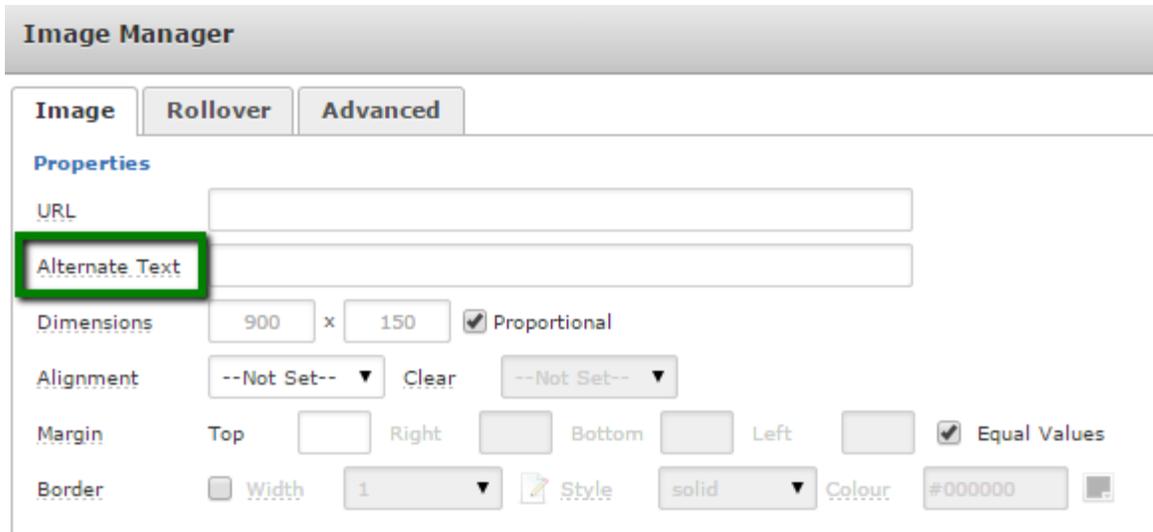
Before we begin to talk about site design and development that is search engine friendly, it is crucial to remember one thing. Websites do not look the same to us, as they do to search engines. Content that may be amazing and important in our eyes, might be meaningless or not even interpretable for a search engine. And this has to do with something we spoke about earlier, spiders and indexing. Some content is better when it comes to being indexed and being understood by spiders, some content simply is not.

Indexable content

Although web-crawling has become quite a sophisticated task, it has not gotten far enough to view the web through human eyes and needs to be helped along the way. So all design and development needs to be done keeping in mind what the World Wide Web looks like to search engines. We need to look at the world through the eyes of a robot or software, in order to create websites that are search engine friendly and have long-term optimization built into them, rather than relying on a few tweaks here and a few keywords there, which will only help your SEO for a few weeks or months, maximum.

It is crucial to remember that despite how advanced spiders may have become, they are still only good at picking up on content that is mostly HTML and XHTML, so the elements of your website that you think are most important have to be in the HTML code. Java applets, Flash files or images are not read very well by spiders or understood for that matter. So, you could have a great website designed, with its most amazing content outside the HTML code and a search engine will not pick it up because what the spiders are looking at is the HTML text.

However, there are a few things you can do to make images, videos or fancy Java applets on your site become somewhat involved in the indexing business, or become ***indexable content***. First of all, if you have any images you have in JPG, GIF or PNG format that you want spiders to notice and index, you will need to include them in the HTML by assigning them alt attributes and giving the search engine a description of the image.



Secondly, you can still make the content found in Flash or Java plug-ins count by providing text on the page that explains what the content is about.

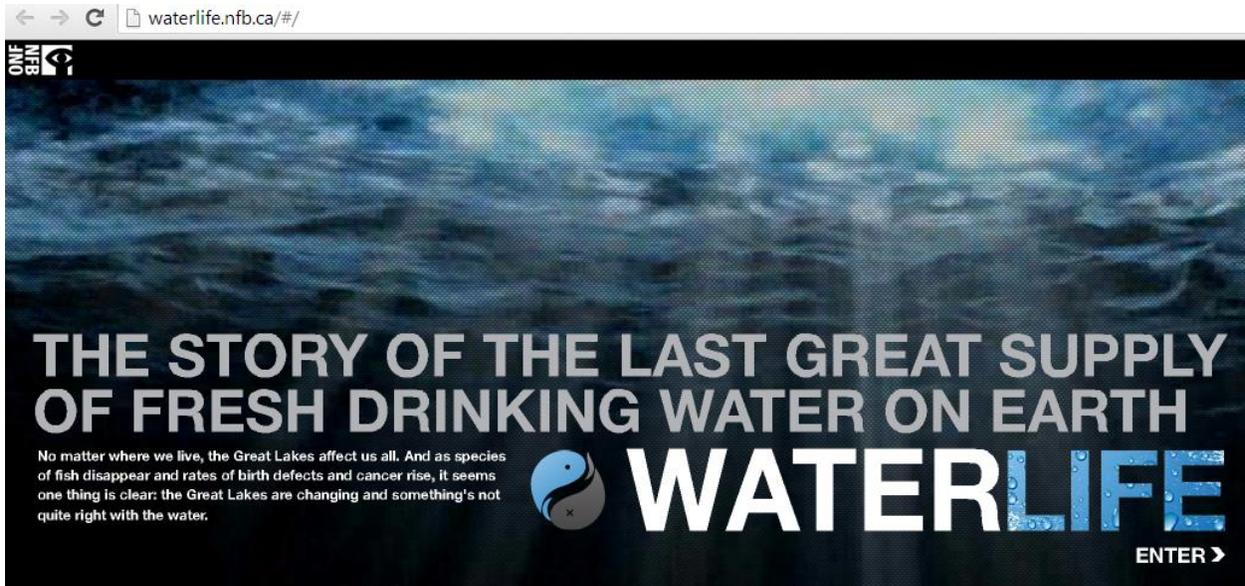
Thirdly, if you have video or audio content on your website that you think matters and should be indexed, content that you think users should be able to find, you need to provide the search engine a transcript of the phrases to go along with that audio/video content.

Remember, if a spider cannot read it, the search engine will not be feeding it to users. Content needs to be indexable if it is to be visible to a search engine and then appear on a search engine. There are tools that you can use like SEO-browser.com or Google's cache to look at website through the eyes of a search engine and see what it looks like to a spider. It helps you understand what you might be doing wrong and what others might be doing right when it comes to being noticed by search engines.

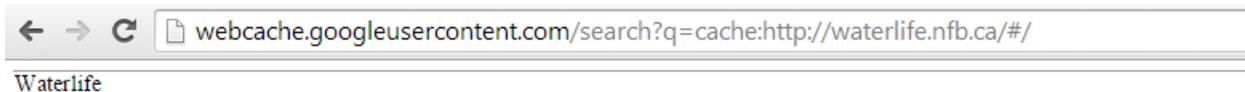
One of the ways to see the content through the eyes of a search engine is to access the cached version of website. You should type the following in the address bar of your browser. Do not forget to replace the word "example" with the URL of the website.

[http://webcache.googleusercontent.com/search?q=cache:http://**example.com**](http://webcache.googleusercontent.com/search?q=cache:http://example.com/)
/

For example, if your website is built using Java, you will see something like this:



But that is not what the search engines see. Using the text copy of the cached version of the website, you see that the same website is seen quite differently by the search engines. In fact, search engines cannot see anything on this website apart from the title “Waterlife”.



Title tags

A title tag (also called title element, technically) is one of the most important things you give to a search engine spider and its algorithm. It should ideally be a brief and precise description of what your website is all about and the content that a user can hope to find.

Title tags are not just important for search engines but also for the benefit of users. There are three dimensions in which a title tag generates value and these are relevancy, browsing and the results that search engines produce.

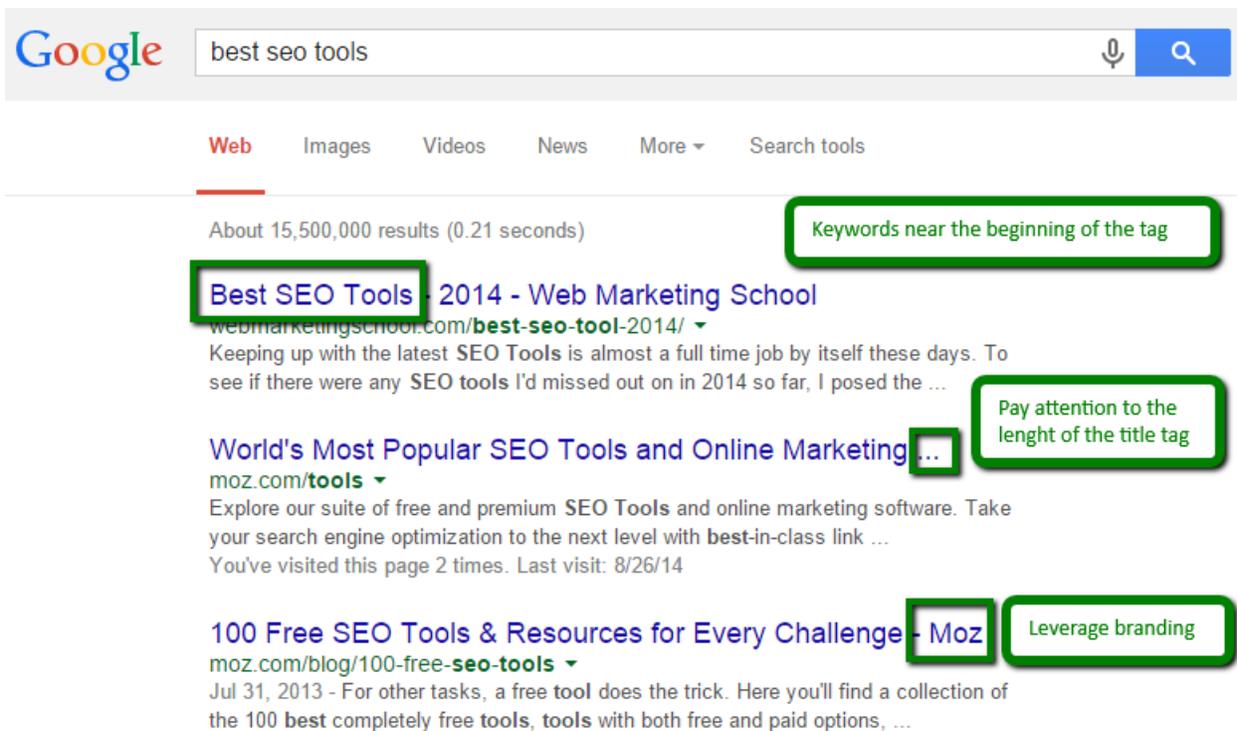
Typically, search engines are only interested in the first 50-65 words of your title tag, so the first thing you will need to be careful about is the length of your title tag. Remember, title tags are not an introduction to your website, they are a summary responsible for attracting users and helping search engines understand how relevant your website is in relation to keywords found in the queries users make on search engines. If you are involved with multiple keywords then you might need to stretch the limit to pursue better rankings and it would be better to go longer.

Another little tweak to help you with rankings is to try and get your important keywords as near to the start or opening of the title tag as possible. It will increase the chances of users actually clicking through to your website when they see your page listed in search results.

In a survey conducted with SEO industry leaders, 94% of the participants shared that the title tag was the best place to insert keywords in order to pursue higher rankings on search engines. That is why putting emphasis on coming up with creative, descriptive, relevant and keyword-rich title tags is so important. They are the soul of your site expressed in a sentence or two, and quite possibly the only representation that most users will have of your website unless they actually visit it.

One thing you can do to increase the possibility of better rankings through your title tag is use something called **leverage branding**. What you do is, you try to use a brand name at the end of your title tag. This will translate into better click-through rates with individuals who already know that brand or relate to it. You can experiment with title tags using the following tentative structure:

Primary Keyword → Secondary Keyword → Brand name / end



It is good to view how your title tag will appear in different online situations, such as when someone posts the URL to your website on a social media site like Facebook or when your name appears on different search engines. Search engines will automatically make the keywords which match those in the query appear in bold. So it may be a good idea to use your keywords carefully. You should not depend only on one, but you should have two or three keywords that you can rely on for higher rankings.

Meta tags

Meta tags give descriptions, instructions and provide information to search engines and a whole host of other clients regarding a webpage. They are part of the HTML or XHTML code of a website and the head section. There are many types of meta tags and they all have their uses depending on the meta tag, from controlling the activity of search engine spiders to telling a search engine that the design of your website is mobile-friendly.

Not all search engines will understand all meta tags, for example, Google will ignore the meta tags it does not understand and only recognize the ones it does. It serves little or no purpose to focus on putting keywords in the metadata and expecting it to yield better rankings. Below is a list of some useful meta tags and what you can do with them.

'Spider tags'

The robots meta tag can be employed to influence the activity of internet spiders on a page-to-page basis.

Index/noindex will inform the search engine whether or not to index a certain page. You usually do not need to tell a search engine to index every page, so the noindex option is the only one you will probably be using.

Follow/nofollow will let an engine to follow or not to follow a certain page when it crawls and thus disregard it and the links found on that page for ranking.

Eg : <META NAME="ROBOTS" CONTENT="NOINDEX, NOFOLLOW">

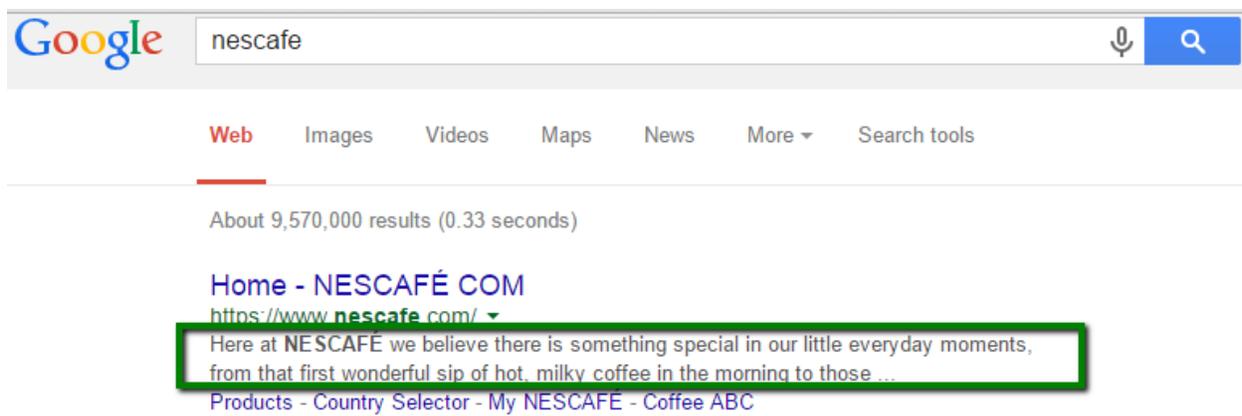
Noarchive lets engine know that you do not wish for it to save a cache copy of a certain page.

Nosnippet will tell the engine not to display a description with a page's URL and title when it shows up on the search results page.

Noodp/noydir will instruct an engine to refrain from picking up a description snippet for the page from either the Open Directory Project or Yahoo! Directory when the page comes up in search results.

The description meta tag (or meta description)

This is a short description of your web page that lets a search engine know what the page is about and it will, at times, appear as a snippet beneath your site title on a search engine's results page. Keywords found in the metadata will usually not influence rankings. It is best to not exceed the 160 characters limit in your meta description as it will be cut off in display and the W3C guidelines recommend the same length.



It is a good idea to find out which meta tags different search engines understand and what meta elements they ignore, so you do not waste your time thinking you have optimized in the meta area while actually being ignored by the search engine. You can find a list of meta tags that Google recognizes online. Yahoo! and Bing have a similar document for webmasters.

Meta tags that Google understands:

<https://support.google.com/webmasters/answer/79812?hl=en>

Yahoo! understands the following tags:

<https://help.yahoo.com/kb/yahoo-web-hosting/create-meta-tags-sln21496.html>

Bing explains the most important tags in the SEO segment of the Webmaster Guidelines:

<http://www.bing.com/webmaster/help/webmaster-guidelines-30fba23a>

Link structure

It is important for search engine spiders to be able to crawl your website smoothly and find their way on to all the links that your site contains. This requires for your website to have a link structure that is search engine friendly and carved out keeping spiders in mind. If there are no direct and crawlable links pointing to certain pages in your website, they might as well not exist no matter what great content they may contain, since they are unreachable by spiders. It is surprising how many websites with great content make the mistake of having a link structure with navigation that makes it hard, if not impossible, to get parts of their website to appear on search engines.

There are many reasons why certain parts of a website or pages might not be reachable by search engines. Let us discuss some common reasons.

Firstly, if you have content on your website that is accessible only after submitting certain forms, the content on those pages will not be accessible to spiders most likely, and thus not reachable for search engines. Whether your form requires a user to login with a password, fill in a few details, or answer some questions, spiders will be cut off from any content found behind those forms since they usually do not make an effort to submit forms. That content becomes invisible.

Secondly, spiders are not very good at crawling pages with links in Java and pay even lesser attention to the links embedded within such a page. You should try to use HTML instead or accompany it with Java wherever possible. The same goes for links that are in Flash or other

plug-ins. Even if they are embedded on the main page, a spider might not pick them up through the site's link structure and they may remain invisible because they are not HTML links.

Thirdly, the robots meta tag and the robots.txt file are both used to influence the activity of spiders and restrict it. Make sure that only the pages you wish for spiders to disregard have directives for spiders to do so. Unintentional tagging has caused the demise of many fine pages in the experience of webmasters as a community.

Fourthly, another common reason for a broken link structure for spiders are search forms. You may have millions of pages of content hidden behind a search form on your website, and it would all be invisible for a search engine since spiders do not conduct searches when they are crawling. You will need to link such content to an indexed page, so that the content can be found during webcrawling.

Fifth, try to avoid making links in frames or iFrames unless you have a sound technical understanding of how search engines index and follow links in frames. Although technically they are crawlable, they pose structural problems and those relating to organization.

Lastly, links can be ignored or have poor accessibility if they are found on pages with hundreds of them, as spiders will only crawl and index a given amount to safeguard against spam and protect rankings. It is best to make sure that your important links are found on clean and organized pages and knit into a clear structure that is easy for spiders to follow and index.

Nofollowlinks

There is a lot to be said about the debate over nofollow links and it can be confusing just understanding what they actually are.

Let us start by looking at what normal 'follow' links are. When someone follows a link to your website or a page, that page gets a bit of something SEO professionals call linkjuice. You can also imagine points given to the link. The more inbound links you get, the more SEO points you get. Search engines interpret this as a good thing, because they figure if lots of people are linking to your site then it must be of value and thus, that page will be given preference by the search engine in its results.

The thing about linkjuice is that like real juice, it flows. It is transferred from site to site. So for example if National Geographic has a link to your page on their website, that means a lot more linkjuice or points than if some small blog mentioned your URL with a hyperlink. National Geographic, being a wildly popular internet destination, has obviously more link juice and PageRank.

Now this is where nofollow links come in and why they have become so important in the world of SEO and getting better rankings. A nofollow link does not add points to your page or count for that matter; they are treated like the losers of the link world in terms of SEO points.

A typical nofollow link is a tag that looks like this:

```
<a href="http://www.example.com/" rel="nofollow">Example Website!</a>
```

While search engines mostly ignore any attributes you apply to links, they generally are responsive to the exception of the rel="nofollow" tag. Nofollow links direct search engines not to follow certain links, although some still do. It also gives out the message that this page should not be read as normal.

Nofollow links started out as a method for avoiding automatically generated spam, blog entries and other forms of link injection, but over time it has become a tool for letting search engines know not to transfer any link value and disregard certain pages. When you put the nofollow tag on a link it will be read differently by search engines and treated differently than the other pages, which are followed links.

Having a little or even a good amount of nofollow links to your website is not necessarily a bad thing, as many popular or highly ranked websites will generally have a larger number of inbound nofollow links than their less popular and lower ranked colleagues. It is all part of having a large portfolio of links, that make up your website.

Google confirms that it does not follow nofollow links in a majority of the cases and they do not allow them to transfer PageRank or anchor text. Nofollow links are disregarded in the graph of the web that the search engine maintains for itself. They are also said to carry no weight and are thought of as just HTML text and nothing more. However, a lot of webmasters believe that search engines regard nofollow links from high authority websites as signs of trust.

While nofollow links might seem like bad news for link building if they are linked to your site, this does not have to be the case. Nofollow links still build awareness for your website, as users will still get to see the name of your site and even click on the link it. The only difference is that you will not be getting better rankings, as a result of the nofollow link.

As a webmaster, nofollow links are of immense use to you too because there will be pages that you want a search engine to disregard and not follow. They are also of immense use on paid links, comments, forums and anywhere you can expect spamming or pages that are little visited because they might bring down the performance of your site overall.

It is good to have a diverse link profile of backlinks that is made up of follow links and nofollow links both. Although follow links will definitely do more for your SEO, nofollow links have their uses and can be instrumental in avoiding spam and having unnecessary pages indexed by spiders.

Keyword usage

Keywords are perhaps the most important element in a search activity. They are the basic unit of a query, and indexing and retrieval of information would be impossible without them. Just imagine if there were 25 different words used for car tires. It would be a nightmare trying to get any traffic to your website from search engines, because you would be missing out on a majority of users interested in car tires, just because you did not have the right word to match the keywords they used for car tires.

Search engines index the web as they crawl, using keywords to form indices. Every keyword will have millions of pages to only thousands (depending on the word) which are all relevant to that keyword. If you think of Google or Bing as one huge palace and websites as people, then the keywords are the separate rooms with tags on their door and it is the job of spiders to put relevant people in the most relevant rooms. Websites with more relevant and identifiable keywords get to stay in more than one room of the palace – the more popular the keyword, the bigger its bedroom and thus, the more people in it.

Search engines make use of many small databases based on keywords rather than one huge database that contains everything. This makes sense, just as products are listed in aisles in a supermarket, which makes it easier to find what you need and have a look around. Imagine if there were not any aisles and items were placed without classification and order, it would be a nightmare just buying a toothbrush and a watermelon, because of the size of the supermarket and endless categories of products available.

It goes without saying that whatever content you wish to serve as keywords or to be identifiers for your website, what you want to be recognized for on the internet, you will need to confirm that such content is indexable and that it has been indexed by a search engine.

When considering keywords, it is best to remember that the more specific your keyword, the better the chances you have of coming up higher in a results page when someone types it into their query. For example, 'dog' is a very general and popular keyword and one for which you will have considerable competition. Even established and popular websites with a wide user base have problems staying on top with general keywords.

So if you are a small fish in a big online sea your chances of attracting attention are very low if you are stuck with general keywords with a lot of competition. However, carrying the above mentioned example forward, if you made your keyword more specific, say, something like 'pedigree dogs Budapest', you have come into a keyword field which is much more relevant to you, where there is lesser competition. Here, you actually have chances of getting into the top of the page or at least high up in the results.

Now you will be more accessible to the users who are interested in exactly the content that you have to offer. Remember, it is always better to aim for being higher up in a more specific or narrow keyword than to settle for lower rankings for a more popular keyword.

Search engines pay much more attention to your title tag, anchor text, meta tag description and the first 200 words of your webpage. So it is crucial to SEO that you use your keywords as much as possible but with maturity in these four areas. Be careful about overuse. There is nothing more obnoxious than a website that is stuffed with keywords unnecessarily and without elegance. Overkill when it comes to keywords will actually work against you and defeat the purpose, which was to win the trust of users and search engines.

It appears unprofessional, makes your website seem without real value, and resembles spam because it gives the impression to search engines and users alike, that you are somehow trying to trick the system into paying attention to your page. Think of yourself as a user– do you trust websites or even like websites that seem to jump at the excuse of using a keyword repeatedly? Or are you more likely to disregard such a website as lacking in content value? You can keep track of [keyword density through tools](#) available online that measure the way keywords are spread out across your page.



KEYWORD DENSITY ANALYZER

Url Html Plain text

Type text or enter a website address...

Include Meta tag Keywords Minimum word length

Include Meta tag Description Minimum occurrences

Include Page Title

Use our default [stop words list](#)

Remember, if you choose your keywords properly and honestly, you will not need to stuff your content with them, as they will appear naturally in the text to a necessary degree because they are actually relevant to your website and not just something you picked up for rankings or because it was trending on the internet. Find the closest and most popular keyword that is relevant to your website. You can get away with a little cleverness when it comes to the use of popular or strategic keywords, but that is only if you already have a keyword that is relevant to your website and has been chosen honestly, keeping the benefit of the user in mind.

URL structures

Although not seen to be as important any more, a URL can actually influence rankings for websites in major ways and the way users experience a website and use it. The first rule is that if looking at your URL, a user can predict correctly what content they might find on your website, you have gotten it right. A URL with too much cryptic text and stated parameters or

numbers seems intimidating and unfriendly to users. That is why it is best to avoid oddly worded URLs, with few recognizable words or words, that are relevant.

www.nytimes.com/pages/arts/index.html?action=click&pgtype=Homepage®ion=TopBar&module=HPMiniNav&contentCollection=Arts&WT.nav=page

☰ 🔍 The New York Times

Arts

SUBSCRIBE NOW

SIGN IN

Register ⚙️

Try to make your URL seem friendly.

www.nytimes.com

☰ SECTIONS 🔍 SEARCH

U.S. INTERNATIONAL 中文



The New York Times

The second thing is to aim for keeping your URL as short as possible, not just for your main page but for the pages that spread out from your main page. This makes it easier for users to type, remember and copy/paste your URL into social media sites, forums, emails, blogs, etc. It also means that your URL will be showing up whole on the search results page.



Thirdly, try to get any relevant keywords from your website into your URL as well, as this can help your rankings substantially and also help you gain more trust and popularity with users. But trying to lace it with as many keywords as possible is also dangerous and will actually defeat the purpose and work against you. So beware of overuse.

Fourthly, and this is very important, always prefer static URLs over dynamic ones so you can make them more readable for people and somewhat self-explanatory. Links, which contain a lot of numbers, hyphens and technical terms do not do well with users, affect your ranking and interfere with indexing by spiders.

Lastly, it is best to use hyphens (-) to separate words in your URL as opposed to underscores (_), the plus sign (+) or space (%20) for separation, since all web apps do not interpret these symbols properly in comparison to the classic hyphen or dash.

A clean and friendly URL is not just good for your relationship with search engines and helping them crawl better, it is also good for the way users experience your website. Avoid using generic words in your URL like 'page_3.html', putting in unnecessary parameters or session IDs, and using capitalization where it is not needed. It is also best to avoid having multiple URLs for the same page, as this will distribute the reputation for the content found on that page amongst the different URLs. You can fix this by using the old 301 direct or rel="canonical" link element where you cannot redirect.

Remember, URL structures neaten up the look and feel of your website and affect the way both users and search engines experience your website. Some URLs are more crawlable than others and some are more friendly looking and convenient for users than others.

5

Basics of Keyword Research

5. Basics of Keyword Research

As we have discussed earlier regarding the importance of keywords and the crucial role keywords play in search engine optimization, one can only optimize a website in relation to keywords, if one actually has the right ones. You can only put keywords in the right places, once you have come up with the keywords that are the most beneficial for rankings and the most relevant to your content.

The search for better keywords is not a once-and-for-all task, but rather a continuous process and a challenge since online environments, the likes and dislikes of users, what is trending or popular, and the way people talk about things, keeps changing.

What is keyword research?

For the purpose of discovering the best keywords possible and staying in the online trend loop, search engine professionals do something called **keyword research**.

Keyword research involves exploring the actual terms used in queries by users on search engines, with the aim of discovering niche keywords that are yet to become competitive and then these keywords are looked into further to find resembling or substitutable keywords. This whole endeavor is powered by keyword research tools, which have the functions of a thesaurus and word suggestion built into them.

Search engines are also known to make their own keyword research tools available for webmasters, tools which also give statistics for keywords, as in how much a certain keyword has been typed in and what other words it is used most with. Google provides [Keyword Planner](#), while Bing has [Bing Keyword Research](#) tool. Both of these tools, as well as similar tools developed by other companies, will help you explore:

- Competitiveness of the keywords you are interested in
- Estimated amount of traffic for those keywords
- Keyword suggestions to get new ideas and similar phrases you can use on your website

Additionally, you can also:

- Use keyword filters to customize the search
- Add location or language in order to use targeting feature

- Use negative keyword that will be excluded from the research
- Choose the custom date range

Keyword Planner
Plan your next search campaign

What would you like to do?

- Search for new keyword and ad group ideas

Enter one or more of the following:

Your product or service

Your landing page

Your product category

Targeting ?

All locations ✎

All languages ✎

Google ✎

Negative keywords ✎

Date range ?

Show avg. monthly searches for: Last 12 months ✎

Customize your search ?

Keyword filters ✎

Keyword options ✎
 Show broadly related ideas
 Hide keywords in my account
 Hide keywords in my plan

Keywords to include ✎

Get ideas

- › Get search volume for a list of keywords or group them into ad groups

- › Get traffic forecasts for a list of keywords

- › Multiply keyword lists to get new keyword ideas

The end of this activity is to select keywords, which are relevant to the content and ideal for the SEO objectives of a website.

Phases of keyword research

Keyword research can be divided into several phases that will help you develop the final list of keywords:

- Identify the keywords that are relevant to your business
- Add words to create keyword phrases that are more specific (You can add adjectives, location, etc.)
- Explore the keywords of your competitors to get new ideas
- Explore the competitiveness of those keywords and keyword phrases using keyword research tool
- Use the keyword research tools to get more ideas on keywords
- Remove the generic keywords and keywords which are too competitive
- Finalize the list with 10 to 50 keywords and keywords phrases that will later be used in the process of optimizing your website

The basic aim of all keyword research is to develop a kind of library of terms, which are as relevant to the content of a website as possible, yet have not been used to death by other SEOs and webmasters. Ideally, keyword researchers are looking for terms with lesser competition and more search potential (how many users search for it). A good find for a researcher could be characterized as a term that a lot of people are putting into their queries but not a lot websites are using in their content - the higher the former value and the lower the latter, the better the keyword.

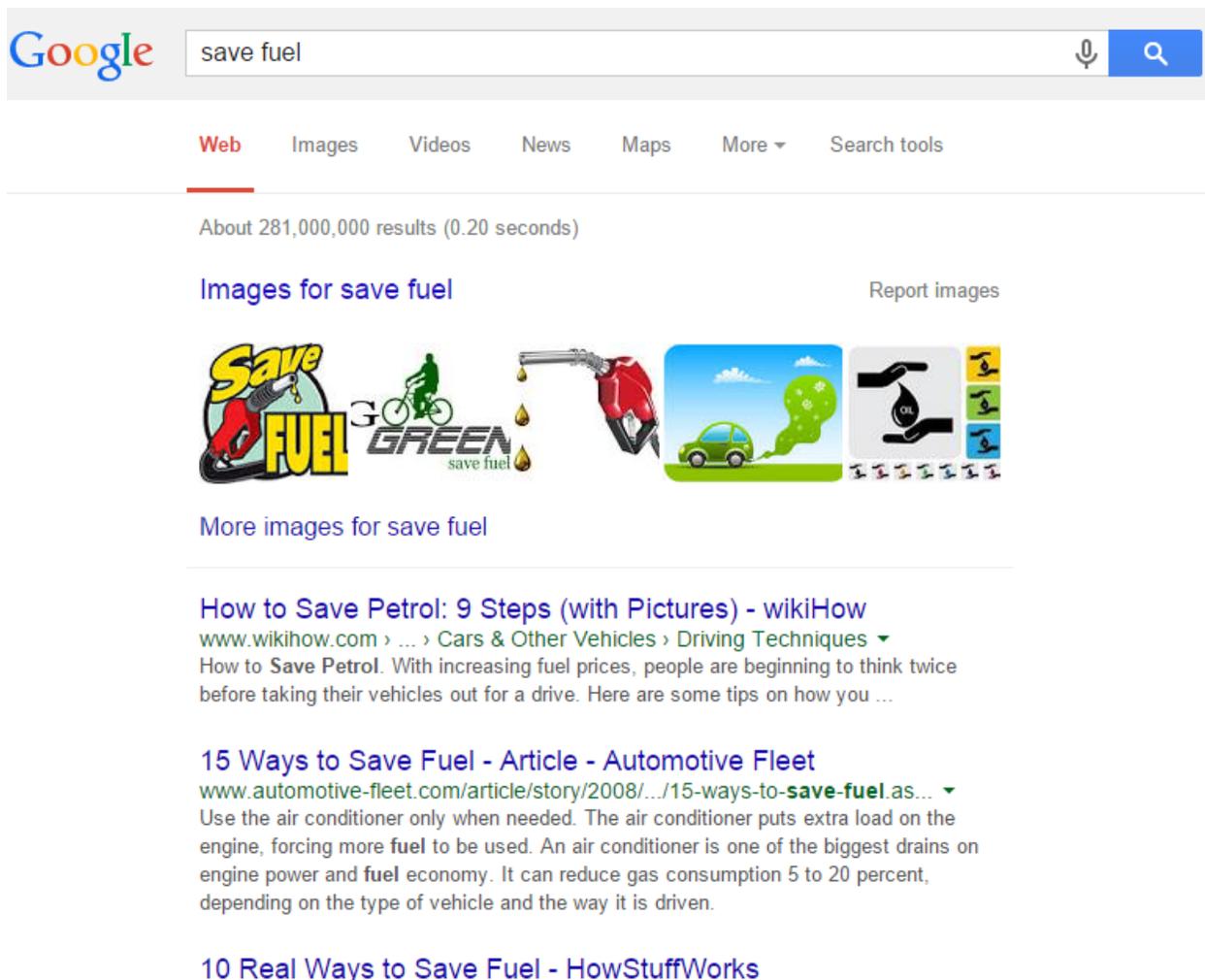
However, there is a dilemma in keyword research. Though terms that have little competition are easier to work with in terms of rankings, they also have fewer searches. Keywords which have strong competition may have searches in the millions, and thus a lot of potential traffic to offer, but they are very difficult to work with when it comes rising in their rankings. So different SEO professionals will have different strategies in what kind of keywords they pursue and how they pursue them.

Let us look at a few examples of what keyword research is all about. Let us take a really popular keyword that has a lot of searches and traffic to offer already. The first one we will look at is 'weight loss', which when you type into Google, you get 14 and a half million results for. Now it goes without saying that this keyword is pure gold, but almost impossible to get even an average ranking for, let alone be on top of the first page. A keyword researcher will look for terms that convey the same meaning as 'weight loss' but one that is easier to battle for rankings wise. So say for example, we change it to 'reduce weight' and voila, we are down to just 2 and half million results, which means we have cut the competition down almost six times by just changing the words a little.

Now, this keyword can be further adjusted by narrowing down the competition even more through adding words to make it more specific. We can do this in a number of ways; for example, by adding a geographical filter by adding in a city or country to the keyword and making it into a phrase, or by focusing in on more specialized content.

Let us look at an example of these two methods. We could employ a keyword phrase like 'reduce weight with aerobics in Montreal' or 'reduce weight using supplements'. In both these cases we would have come to an even more workable competition and yet have a lot of potential traffic to attract. We started out with a subject that had 14.5 million other competitors and we narrowed it down to just a hundred thousand, while remaining within the proximity of the original immensely popular keyword. This is what keyword research is all about and why it is so important.

Let us take one last example. This time we will use an even more popular keyword – 'save fuel', which runs more than 280 million results.



The image shows a Google search interface for the keyword "save fuel". The search bar contains the text "save fuel" and a search button. Below the search bar, there are navigation tabs for "Web", "Images", "Videos", "News", "Maps", "More", and "Search tools". The "Web" tab is selected. The search results show "About 281,000,000 results (0.20 seconds)". Under the "Images" section, there are several thumbnails: a "Save FUEL" logo, a "GREEN save fuel" logo with a cyclist, a gas pump nozzle, a car with a green leaf, and a hand holding a drop of oil. Below the images, there are search results for "How to Save Petrol: 9 Steps (with Pictures) - wikiHow" and "15 Ways to Save Fuel - Article - Automotive Fleet".

Google

save fuel

Web Images Videos News Maps More Search tools

About 281,000,000 results (0.20 seconds)

Images for save fuel Report images

Save FUEL GREEN save fuel

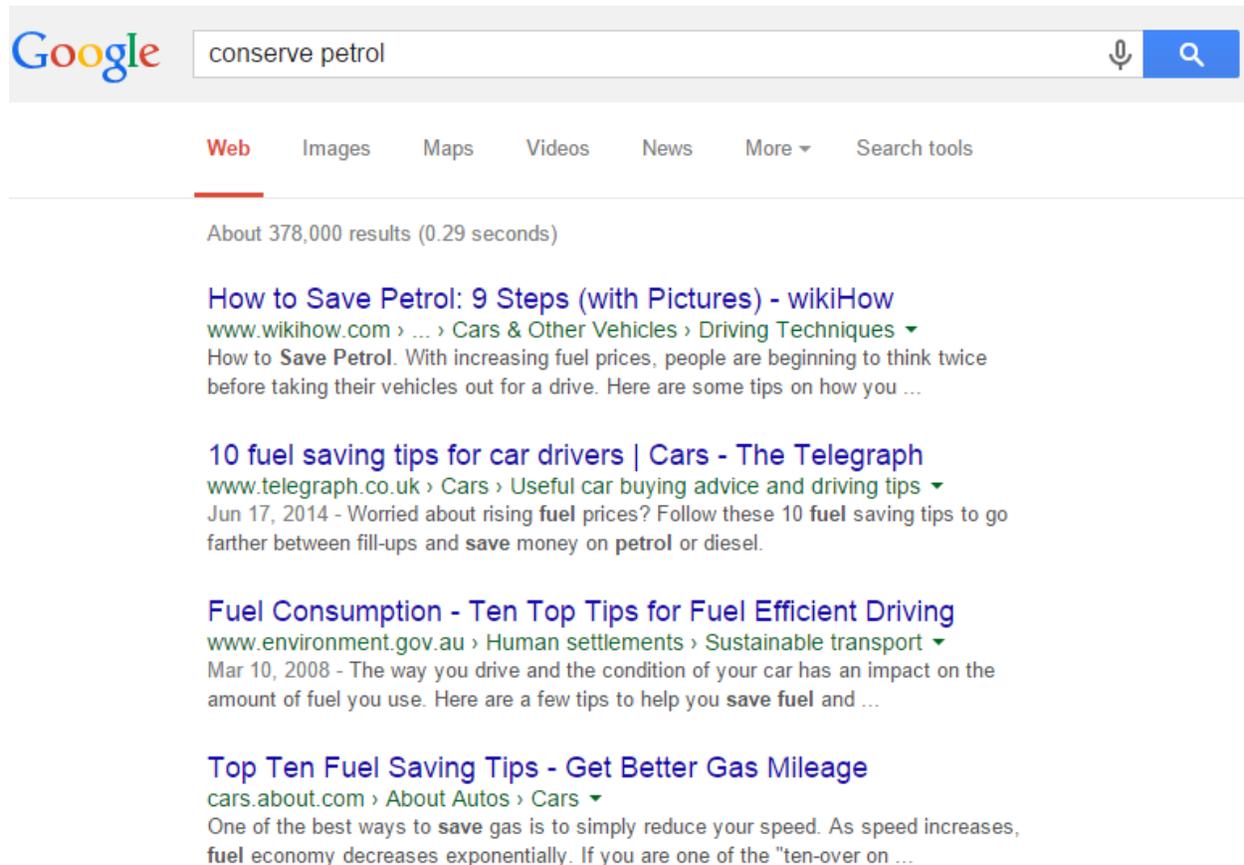
More images for save fuel

[How to Save Petrol: 9 Steps \(with Pictures\) - wikiHow](#)
www.wikihow.com > ... > Cars & Other Vehicles > Driving Techniques
How to Save Petrol. With increasing fuel prices, people are beginning to think twice before taking their vehicles out for a drive. Here are some tips on how you ...

[15 Ways to Save Fuel - Article - Automotive Fleet](#)
www.automotive-fleet.com/article/story/2008/.../15-ways-to-save-fuel.as...
Use the air conditioner only when needed. The air conditioner puts extra load on the engine, forcing more fuel to be used. An air conditioner is one of the biggest drains on engine power and fuel economy. It can reduce gas consumption 5 to 20 percent, depending on the type of vehicle and the way it is driven.

[10 Real Ways to Save Fuel - HowStuffWorks](#)

Now you might be thinking it is impossible to work with a figure like that. But keyword research can make it workable. Let us replace 'save' by a less common verb and replace fuel with a less general noun, and indeed when we type in 'conserve petrol,' we have only 370,000 competitors as opposed to the original 280 million that we were up against!



This is the power of keyword research. Now let us look at the tools used to conduct keyword research.

Keyword research tools: free and paid

Keyword research involves the use of a whole arsenal of tools available online; some of them are paid and some of them are free. And of course, you will come across tools which are free within some parameters but to take advantage of their full functions and capacities, you will need to buy a premium package. In this section, we will be exploring some of the most useful tools available right now and how you can make the most of them.

First let us look at the paid tools and the premium services they offer.

[Moz Keyword Analysis](#)

With this tool you can analyze up to 20 keywords in terms of difficulty, how much they are searched on average every month and the top 10 sites in their ranking. If you have the premium membership costing \$99 offered by Moz, this tool is included in it. It comes with a 30-day free trial.

Moz Keyword Difficulty and SERP Analysis Tool

Search Volume and Competitive Analysis for any Keyword or Phrase



[Advanced Web Ranking](#)

Also starting at \$99 for a lifetime license, but with basic keyword research functionality, you can get the full capabilities of this tool with its advanced keyword research functions at \$399 for a lifetime license. Although on the expensive side, the tool is well worth it in some aspects. It can provide you data from Google Adwords, Google Webmaster API, 7Search, Wordtracker, Google Suggest, Yahoo! API Related Keyword Search, Google Trends and SEMRush together in a single tool.



Powerful online SEO software
For thriving webmasters and internet marketers

- Easy local and mobile rank tracking
- 100% White labeled reports online
- Trustworthy competition monitoring
- Data privacy guaranteed

[Raven Tools Research Central](#)

Raven Tools Research Central brings to you the data from SEOMoz, Majestic SEO and OpenCalais, all in one location. Same as Moz's tool, this comes with Raven Tools's premium membership, which begins at \$99 and comes with a free 30-day trial.



Internet Marketing Software

Testimonials

Research Central

SEO research tools gather business intelligence in seconds.

[Keyword Spy](#)

This tool is really more like a weapon of espionage as the name also suggest. It is essentially a tool to counter your competition, and for looking at what is going on backstage on their SEO enterprise. You can conduct research regarding your competitor's paid results, organic results and the affiliate keywords they are using. Keyword Spy will set you back \$89, which is the starting cost.



[Wordtracker](#)

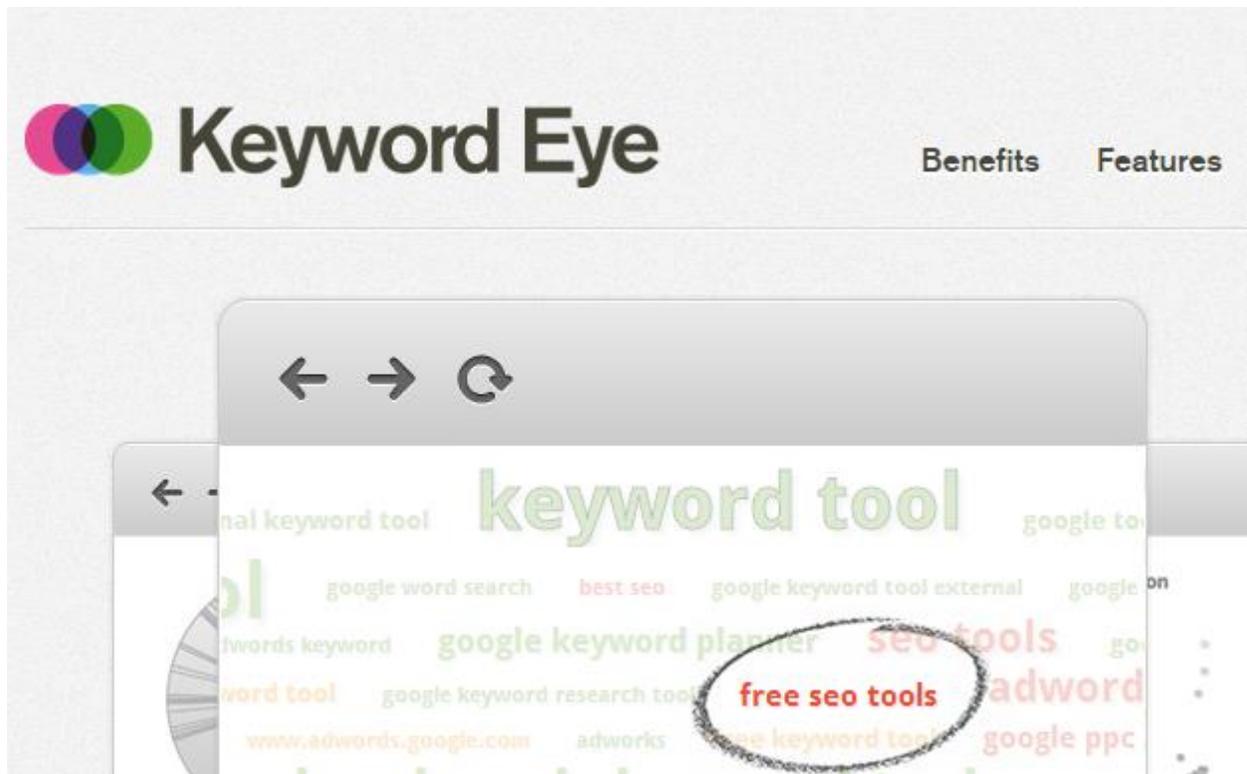
Wordtracker is kind of a unique tool because of a feature that you might not find elsewhere. It lets you know what your users are typing in their searches when they are on the verge of buying something. It brings to you high-performing and profitable keywords for all your e-commerce needs. Pricing for this tool starts at \$27 for the bronze membership, \$65 for the silver and \$99 for the gold. Silver is the bestseller and it is usually enough for most of your research needs.

Reveal high-performing keywords in minutes.

Now, let us explore what the internet has to offer for free.

[KeywordEye](#)

Due to being developed by a British team, it automatically uses Google UK for its research but you can adjust that to Google US and a number of other countries and their results. KeywordEye basically gives you a visual interpretation of keyword suggestions ordered by their search volume, results or any other order you wish to see in the visual diagram, such as ordering it by AdWords ranking.



[SEMrush](#)

Although being a paid tool, its free version is quite effective for your keyword research needs and that is why it is being discussed in the free tools section here. SEMrush is exceptionally good at telling you through its metrics the size of competition on any given keyword being used on Google. SEMrush will also provide you with similar or related terms for the keywords you are analyzing. This can be very helpful for staying up to date.



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SEMRUSH COMPETITIVE DATA

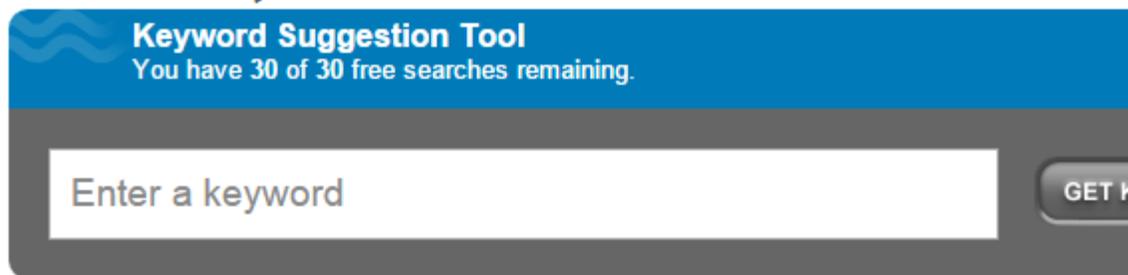
FOR DIGITAL MARKETING PROFESSIONALS

[WordStream Free Keyword Tool](#)

With over a trillion terms stored in its awesome database, WordStream's Keyword Tool is a gamechanger in aiding you to select the most lucrative keyword and possible longtail keywords possible.

Home : Free Keyword Tool

Free Keyword Tool



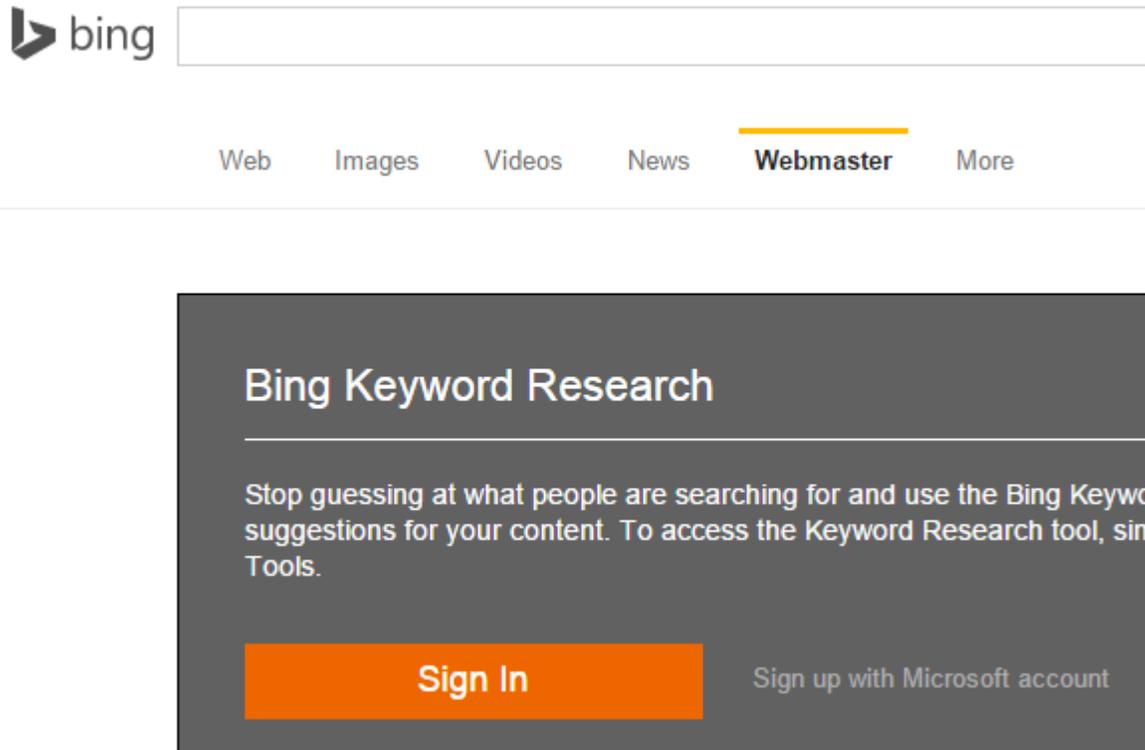
[SEO Book Keyword Tool](#)

The SEO Book Keyword Tool will give you the daily search volumes, cost estimates for Google AdWords, links to other vertical databases and a lot of other functions. SEO Book Keyword Tool is powered by Wordtracker's Keyword Tool.



[Bing Keyword Research](#)

With up to 6 months of search history to offer you as organized data rather than averages, Bing's Keyword Research aids you in exploring what users are searching for on Bing. You can find this tool in Bing's Webmaster toolbox.



Well now that you have seen 10 examples of paid and free keyword research tools, you probably have a good idea why tools are required and how effective, efficient and pivotal they can be in conducting keyword research and in SEO affairs generally. It is not just about creativity, it is also having a good toolbox or arsenal ready, so you can put that very SEO creativity to practical use with as much ease as possible.

The value of a keyword

Although keyword research tools can help a site owner or a webmaster understand what users are searching for in search engines and even present any such information in organized and analytical ways, they cannot aid you in understanding the value of a given search word and its contribution to traffic. That needs to be done the good old-fashioned way – through trial and error hypothesizing and analysis.

Firstly, you need to do some brainstorming and construct some parameters out of a few basic questions. What is the relevancy of a certain keyword? If you were a searcher using the same keyword, would you be content with what you found on your page? How much is this keyword doing for you income wise? Is the generated traffic translating into financial gain? If the answers to these questions affirm the value of your keyword, you should go on.

Secondly, test your keyword in different search engines to understand where you stand in terms of ranking and competition and get a general idea of what you are up against. A keyword that brings up a good number of advertisements or sponsored results on the top of the results page has a fair degree of lucrative possibilities and potential for easy conversion.

Thirdly, it is a useful practice to use paid advertising, using Bing AdCenter or Google AdWords and analyze how that traffic goes in terms of converting users for your website and the generation of revenue. Opt for the choice of 'exact match' on Google AdWords and direct that traffic to the most relevant page on your website. Then follow the traffic for at least 300 clicks or so, keeping an eye on the conversion rate amongst other information.

Lastly, you can use the data you have gathered to construct a rough sketch of the value of a certain keyword and what it is doing for you in your current set up. Looking at the number of users that visited your websites and how many converted into profit for your website, will give you a figure for how much each visitor is worth in terms of dollars.

If you managed to attract 200 visitors, out of which four turned into a profit for the website of \$360, then each of those visitors is worth \$1.8, which is a decent figure if you manage to rise to the top of the rankings to get better impressions, increasing the click-through rates over the course of the next few days. You could turn 400 visits per day into 1200-2000 visits, meaning you could make a small fortune in terms of revenue within a year.

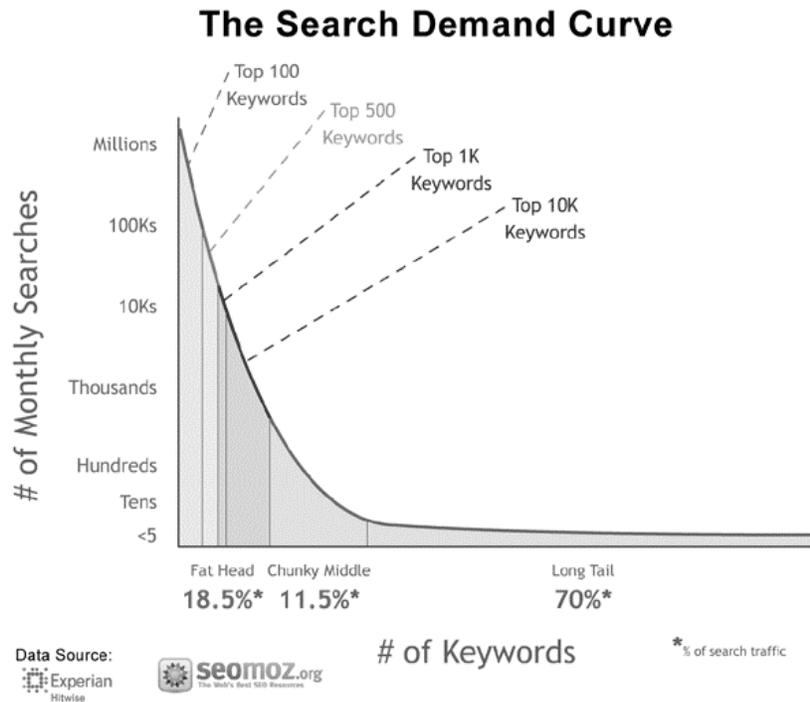
Keyword demand and the legendary long-tail

Remember how we said earlier, how great it would be to do well in the field of a really general and popular keyword like chocolate or cars? Well actually, it turns out that doing well with such a term (rankings wise) might actually not be such a profitable idea.

It is all because of a mysterious and elusive thing that SEO professionals like to call long-tail. It sounds amazing to be able to work with keywords which have 10,000 searches everyday but strangely enough, such popular terms actually make up a minority of the percentages performed, less than 20% of all search traffic actually in some cases. The really useful keywords

that convert into profits and the majority visits are found in the long-tail, which makes up about 70-80% of the search traffic.

So what is the long-tail keyword? To demonstrate this concept effectively, we will need to look at a diagram.



That last section of the diagram colored grey, which represents 70% of the search traffic, is what is referred to as the long-tail. Let us take a look at what just this one graph (and others usually follow a similar trend) can tell us about the internet and how it can aid our SEO efforts.

First of all, you can see that the top 100 and even the top 10,000 keywords actually account for not that big a percentage of search traffic. That must mean that even if you could somehow dominate the top 1000 keywords on search engines, you would be losing out on about 90% of the total search traffic in play. There is a very interesting yet simple reason for that. People usually do not search for broad or very general keywords like 'doors' or 'cool cars'.

Realistically speaking, most searches consist of somewhat unique, constructed and specific phrases made up of more than one keyword. When was the last time you searched for just 'dogs' on Google? So while there may be keywords which singlehandedly have a lot of searches and generated results, they accounts for a small percentage of the total search traffic, as most searches are of the opposite nature; specific, custom and unique with not many searches behind them. In other words, the internet is made up of lots of different keywords and phrases

searched by a small number of people each, rather than a few keywords, which are searched by millions. The real juicy traffic is actually all in the tail.

Secondly, why are we running after traffic? Why are we looking for better rankings? It is not just for the heck of it. It is about generating profit from the visitors to one's website. That process is far easier with traffic found in the long-tail because they already have an idea of what they are looking for. Who do you think is at the stage of buying a scooter, the person who searches for "*Red Scooter*" or the person who searches for "*Buy Honda Dio Z London*" on a search engine?

When it comes to your own website, you will need to think of keywords in terms of your own long-tail keywords. The decision to for which keywords and long-tail keywords to optimize is a crucial one and it will likely affect the amount and (just as importantly) kind of traffic you get, your conversion rates and ultimately the profitability of your website. Different parts of the keyword can bring different types of traffic. It is a good practice to have a diversified SEO target strategy, which focuses on the long-tail, and staying updated on new long-tail keywords, but which also optimizes content to have some potential share in the single keywords.

6

Google Rankings

6. Google Rankings

It is no secret that Google uses around 200 factors in its algorithms to produce search result rankings. Very few of these have been publicly disclosed by Google. However, Google does provide guidelines, tools and resources to help webmasters pursue better rankings. Besides, from officially released documents and guidelines from Google, SEO professionals have also compiled their observations, experiences and speculations about the backend of Google's ranking system.

What affects Google rankings?

There are three aspects to a website that undoubtedly exert a major influence on search engine rankings. These are the usability of a website, the user experience and last but not the least, the actual content of the website.

Let us begin with the user experience and usability of a website as they are closely related.

Usability and user experience

Although not being a variable that influences ranking directly as some other variable might, such as the use of keywords, site and link structure, user experience and usability do affect Google's intuitive understanding of your website, which it has acquired through the studying of user behavior and interaction with your site, the manner in which linking is done and learning of its own artificial intelligence.

Since the usability of a website and its user experience makes it trusted and popular amongst users, Google picks up on this and takes it to mean that the website must have value judging by the behavior of the users. This is also called indirect influence, where a third party's experience of site A is influencing the response of site B towards it.

If your site has been constructed keeping users in mind and designed with some visitor-empathy, feeling what it would be like to visit your own website and what you would want from it if you were a user, and if your website has content and structure that promotes sharing, merits bookmarks and makes users come back and provide backlinks among other positive affirmations, all this will get round to the search engine and influence their rankings for the better.

Content, content, content!

Content is the life and blood of a website and all that a site is in essence. The formula is really simple – have great creative and researched content that is also presented in convenient and effective ways. Let us look at how Google judges your content.

After the dawn of the Google era and the rise of search engines in the late 1990's, it did not take long for them to realize that a good indicator of quality of websites was how much and in what ways they were liked by other sites or in whatever contexts other users could link to them. And since time and statistics proved this unofficial and indirect voting mechanism to be helpful and accurate in gauging a site's value, it is still a part of Google's algorithms today, even though they have reached dizzying complexity. After all, the principle is simple; your website must have something cool to offer if it is earning links. So Google rewards you for your popularity.

Another important indicator or mechanism for judging content is engagement metrics. Every time you conduct a search on Google and then navigate through the results, Google is busy analyzing your behavior and using it to build engagements metrics. If you click the first website on the results page and swiftly head back to results page (in a manner that says thanks, but no thanks) this gets noted down, and with millions of searches being conducted every single day, Google acquires a significant library of data about how users have engaged with your website.

In simpler terms, if your content is not satisfying a visitor, you have made Google look like the bad guy with lousy results and in turn, Google brings you lower in their rankings to avoid the risk of dissatisfying more of their clients.

If you are sick of hearing about spiders and long-tail lizards, this might liven you interest. Google brought something called the Panda Update to the world's attention in 2011 (also called the Farmer) and changed the philosophy and mechanics of their algorithms in very fundamental ways, so much that websites, which enjoyed high rankings, were ranked much lower overnight and websites which had not even made it to the first page, were celebrating top area positions on the results page.

What basically happened is that Google began to incorporate much more machine learning that mimics human judgment of websites for user experience and overall 'likeability' of the website. The Panda update grew more and more intelligent as it learnt and it now makes a lot of subjective decisions normally associated with humans.

The Panda update changes the ranking systems in fundamental ways because it makes ranking more user-centric and it is based on the user's experience, rather than being search engine centered like it was before.

This changing climate in the world of SEO and the new philosophy behind search engine rankings needs to be embraced if an SEO or webmaster is to flourish in an evolving internet environment. These developments are something to be celebrated as they humanize the whole SEO affair, which was too formulized, mechanical and irrelevant to the user's side of the perspective.

Tips for improving Google Rank

With over 200 factors to speculate about and, if possible, try to optimize, doing SEO for Google can seem like an overwhelming job. But firstly, try to remember how things have changed after the rise of Panda and secondly, you do not need to know or even concern yourself with 200 variables to rise in the Google Ranks. It goes without saying that some factors are more important than others. As long as you stick to following the Google guidelines and best recommendations in the SEO world, you should be fine.

Before we look at the list of tips, you should have in mind one basic principle and you should make it the foundation of pursuing higher rankings. No amount of optimization will help you rise in ranks if you are not creating great content for users using the most empathy and creativity possible.

Google is more inclined towards keywords found at the beginning of title tags.

Suppose you could choose between two title tags:

1. Organic fragrances promote harmony with nature and the environment. The only way to know it is to experience it.

AND

2. Promote harmony with nature and the environment by using organic fragrances. You can only harmonize when you experience it.

Which one would you prefer as a webmaster? Google would always prefer the first one, because it starts with a keyword, i.e. organic fragrances.

Google prefers lengthy content over short content on a webpage.

Several studies reported that Google generically preferred web pages, which have 1500+ words in its content over web pages with shorter content than that.

Google is very serious about page loading speed!

You can imagine how important this must be, since it is one of the few ranking signals that have actually been announced in public by Google.

Google favors responsive design vs. separate website for mobiles.

With about roughly 50% of the internet's traffic originating from mobile devices, Google rewards websites, which are designed to respond to the user's device and load themselves accordingly.

Google pays attention to link relevancy.

Recently, an ex-Google employee was noted saying: "Relevancy is the new PR." Google has begun paying much more attention to link relevancy as a form of trust and value, so try and make sure that sites which link to your website, are related to the same topic as your own website.

7

Google Panda and Other Algorithm Updates

7. Google Panda and Other Algorithm Updates

Starting in February 2011, Google began releasing what was to become a series of game-changing updates designed to weed out websites with low-quality content in high quantities, spam-techniques, black-hat SEOs and any webpage that was conning the algorithm into getting a search ranking that it did not deserve. A majority of the websites, hit severely in terms of their SEO visibility, were content-farm websites that were badly dependent on search engines for traffic and revenue, which is perhaps the reason that another name for the Panda update was 'Farmer'.

The rise of Google Panda

Google Panda update made headlines not just in the world of SEO but internet publishing as a whole, going to the extent of forcing million dollar websites out of business overnight or to the brink of bankruptcy, and literally being forced to rethink their practices and business models.

In their own words, Google wanted to restore the rightful places of high quality websites and get rid of what they call 'thin' websites that were taking advantage of clever SEO techniques and loopholes in the algorithms; that contained sub-standard content, were full of intrusive and irrelevant advertising, had ugly user-interfaces and did not bring any real value to the internet. Some excellent and telling examples of the kind of websites that Google was looking to target when it rolled out the first Panda update are www.ezinearticles.com and www.hubpages.com amongst a dozen or so other examples.

The former are, or in some cases were, websites dedicated to farming links through hosting shoddy marketing articles written for purely SEO reasons rather than any content value or the benefit of users and are notorious for passing off marketing spam as informational pieces. The CEO of HubPages who took over after the Panda onslaught, admitted in surprising candor the SEO based business model they had been following pre-Panda and that the administration had clearly encouraged the submitters of content to target the search engines rather than produce content for users or any informational value. Lastly, these websites also contained a vast and overwhelming amount of saturated advertising that covered a massive portion of the user-interface.

Although Google had been making changes to its algorithm on a very regular basis, with the frequency rising to 500-600 changes per year, most if not all of these changes were minor in comparison to what began in February 2011, and they did not have a significant impact on the traffic and revenue of websites that were deeply dependent on Google for their survival.

Compare this with the top twenty websites in the losing boat post-Panda, that lost SEO visibility ranging from a minimum of 65% and many highs of up to 91% loss in search visibility.

Only two websites from a daunting list of the affected losers were able to make any sort of recovery, while the rest continued to slump in their SEO visibility, traffic and revenues, not even being able to return to the position they held after weeks of Panda rolling out, since their descent into SERP oblivion did not cease. After the first Panda update, Google continued fine-tuning the reforms in algorithms it had started in February 2011 by releasing more updates of Panda, with Panda 4.1 being the latest in September 2014, and parallel to the Panda updates, Google floated some other changes in its ranking algorithms with Google Penguin and the EMD update.

Having looked at a brief history of the revolution in the SEO and internet publishing caused by the shockwaves of its series of updates, let us look in detail at what these changes in algorithms actually are, how they affect websites, and what they mean for you if you are an SEO professional, website owner or an online business.

Understanding the evolution of Google's algorithms

We have looked at how Panda came to make an appearance on the internet and more specifically, the SEO scene and whom it affected the most. Let us now discuss in detail what Panda changed and how these changes in algorithms actually work.

There has been a lot of speculation as to the nature of changes and the factors, which led to such a large number of websites losing out in their SEO visibility in such a major way. The whole online publishing community was involved in presenting theories as to what the new algorithms constituted and what elements of a website's design, structure and SEO strategies were to be used to win Google's favor; or in some cases, win back Google's favor and head towards recovery if you were part of the losing bucket after Panda.

Here is a list of factors identified in these new algorithmic changes.

Quality raters and machine-learning algorithms

For quite some time Google had been making use of a human element in its otherwise automated ranking system, and that was the use of Quality Raters. Quality Raters were staff hired for the purpose of reviewing and rating websites by answering a set of questions, which built up a site's quality, authority and trustworthiness, and gave a subjective aspect to the objective and automated technical methodology of understanding websites.

The input of the Quality Raters and their patterns of answering were then fed into a machine-learning algorithm, which you can understand as a kind of artificial intelligence or software capable of evolving and learning, and thus becoming capable of imitating the human Quality Raters in their functioning. Google Panda changed this in a major way by making significantly more use of these machine-learning algorithms, thus indirectly giving Quality Raters a much bigger say in what websites would be considered high quality and which would be not.

Now obviously, when a Quality Rater is asked questions like: Is this a website you might trust with your credit card information? And the sites in question are obviously shoddy content-farms or 'thin' websites like HubPages, Ezinearticles or suite101; the answer would most definitely be an almost unanimous "no." And since humans are more capable of distinguishing between high quality/trustworthiness and low-quality/marketing stunts, due to years of online experience and subjective reasoning, the strong partnership between Quality Raters and machine-learning algorithms, that came to significant prominence and importance as a result of the Panda updates, made it excruciatingly difficult for 'thin' websites and content-farms to fool the system. However, a slight downside to this new approach is precisely the subjective nature of opinion formed by Quality Raters, which could lead to a somewhat unexplainable criterion.

More refined content analysis

Another characteristic feature of the Google Panda update was its use of topic-modeling algorithms to conduct a much more in depth and human analysis of the content of a website with wider and more advanced parameters for rating. So whereas before, Google would only look at the relevance of a page's content in comparison to the description found in tags, meta-elements etc., with Panda coming in to play, the topic-modeling algorithms came equipped with being able to distinguish between finer elements of content such as a page's readability, the visual attraction of content presentation, how unique and solid the content was and other similar factors relating to content.

Duplicate and rehashed content

There are many types of situations that could be classified as duplication of content and just as many reasons for how it could happen, even without you doing it intentionally as an SEO trick. Let us look at some of these:

- True duplicates on the inside

This is a common form of duplicate content and it can happen without any clever designs on your part. An *internal true duplicate* is when you have two URLs leading to the exact same page.

Google will think that you are trying to con the algorithm and quite possibly penalize you when you might just have been negligent in your URL structures. You should eliminate this content immediately.

- True duplicates on the outside

This is a problem usually caused by syndication of content across domains, which could be owned by you or somebody else. The danger lies in this seeming like SERP noise to the search engine and it might lead to website being penalized.

In case you own the other domains, you can use a simple canonical tag to redirect them to one URL of your choice as the source. However, if the domains and properties of the content belong to someone else as well, then you need to figure out how to solve this with the other webmasters.

Another even more annoying scenario could be mischief caused by scrapers who will scrape your content and republish it, resulting in a duplication of content, which then also becomes your problem sadly. Developing site-authority is the usual remedy to this situation, or in more extreme parasitic cases, you will need to bring out the big guns with a DMCA takedown notice.

- Quasi-duplicates on the inside

Now this might have been a clever bit of SEO before Panda began its reign, but it will only get a website into trouble now. Here is how it works. Suppose you have an original piece of content that sits well into a theme like Haute Couture Fashion and makes use of that keyword on a page that is about your online boutique. Now, if you make a minor change to the content of that page, by just adding a sentence about Prêt Couture, and make it a new page with meta-elements and tags that show up in search, as if that whole page was different than the first and all about Prêt Couture, what you will have is actually duplicate content with the exception of one sentence. Google's algorithms might have not been smart enough to notice what you have done, but now you can expect to be penalized for this clever SEO stunt.

When Google crawls these pages it will instantly pick up what is going on and thus, rank it low. You might also be penalized even further, so although it may be a long arduous task to come up with new and original content for the other page with the same theme as the first, remember, being penalized is still a much more arduous and tedious affair.

- Quasi-duplicates on the outside

This will usually occur only when affiliates or partners pick up content from your website or copies of product pages from your site, which results in the appearance of content that is almost a true duplicate and sadly, it gets the same treatment by Google, which sees it as a true duplicate and is quite naturally not very impressed.

The way to avoid this form of duplication of content is to keep your pages stocked with fresh content and add an original and unique introduction to each product page or piece of content that has been borrowed. Another trick that usually helps is to introduce more user-generated content on such pages, with even a few pieces being enough to convince Google not to see your content and the affiliate's page as duplicates.

Search pages on websites

Although this is usually relevant to websites of considerable size and shopping sites in particular, some medium sized websites might want to pay attention to this. Some websites will have an internal search feature through which visitors can make queries to find queries regarding the whole website's contents, like individual product pages or specific articles or informational pages. This can result in those internal search pages showing up on Google's search pages – a phenomenon that Google does not like at all. And the cause of Google's discontent is pretty simple. As a search engine, they are interested in providing access to relevant pages to their users and not more search pages. The solution to this conundrum is quite simple although it takes a bit of time. You should instruct the spiders through the robot.txt option not to index these pages and block them from being followed.

Too many ads

Although originally not an issue with Google, it has become a major indicator of what a low-quality website is in Google's dictionary, which is due to a pattern observed by the Google team, since a majority of the 'thin' marketing type low-quality websites we have mentioned in the first section had extremely high ad ratio, to the effect that they had started resembling cheap tabloid classified ads.

It is only natural for website owners to want to make their sites much more sustainable and easier to finance with as many ads they can get. But Google has started taking note of the ad ratio, thinking of a high quantity of ads on a webpage as noise and thus ranking it low or even penalizing it, even if the website might be providing high quality content. Remember, Panda has not only changed how algorithms work or a few technicalities here and there, but rather caused a deeper shift and reinforcement of Google's philosophy, where now it is the users who

are the measure of all things, making the search engine a user-centric enterprise. Since users would like to see fewer ads, so would Google.

A way around this issue, one through which you do not have to give up your advertising revenue and still not annoy users, is to concentrate on the ads that are performing well, the money makers and shedding the ones that are not relevant or high-earning.

An essential lesson to take from this issue in particular is to understand that the new SEO is all about the user, not the search engine. If you want to do well with the search engine, try to do well with the users sincerely, understanding what their needs are and what you would want if you were a user. The way to Google's heart is now through the satisfaction of online users. This applies to the overall philosophy behind changing SEO and the internet-publishing world.

A chronology of updates since Panda 1.0

We will not present a rough chronology of the updates so you can place all these exciting, yet confusing developments, in context of where we stand today and how we got here.

February 2011 – Panda 1.0/Farmer rolls out

The first Panda acts as a heavy onslaught against content-farm type websites that have high quantities of low-quality content, mostly contributed by users.

April 2011 – Panda 2.0 is rolled out

Panda 2.0 enlarges the impact range of the earlier update from only US search activity to that of all English language search activity around the globe. Panda 2.0 is also the first time that the search engine publicly recognizes the use of data from blocked sites to affect ratings. However, only 2-3% of all searches are impacted by Panda 2.0.

May and June 2011 – Panda 2.1 and Panda 2.2 make an appearance

Both updates add minor tweaks to the previous 2.0 update released in April and impact even smaller percentage of searches. Panda 2.2 is designed to combat the issue of scraper websites, hijacking the rankings of sites with original content and rising higher on SERPs. However, Google is not pleased with the result.

July 2011 – Panda 2.3 is rolled out

According to Google, Panda 2.3 integrates new and more effective signals to discriminate between websites of high and low quality. Following the update, changes are noticeable as some websites begin to rank higher than before.

August 2011 – Panda 2.4 or the Language update rolls out

Panda 2.4 is designed to make algorithms do better with search results across a variety of languages.

September 2011 – Panda 2.5 rolls out

Panda 2.5 results in significant changes on search results in relation to large web outlets. FoxNews, Facebook and Android.com are some of the websites that rise to the top of search pages.

November 2011 – Panda 3.1

A pretty minor update influencing hardly 1% of search activity.

January 2012 – The January 30 Pack is introduced

The January 30 pack is a cocktail of little tweaks here and there to improve the overall user-experience of the search engine, and how convenient the results are, with regard to the searcher's geographical and cultural context. It came with a unique feature called Megasitlinks, through which Google would give preference to results that were more relevant to your location.

January 2012 – Search+ Your World is introduced

Google introduces personalization into its search activity, adding Google+ social data and profiles to search result pages, alongside a feature to switch personalization on and off. Critics say that Google+ is being given preference to relevancy in searches.

January 2012 – Panda 3.2 is rolled out

Panda 3.2 is brought out and Google says it makes no changes in algorithm. No one seems to understand the purpose for this particular update.

April 2012 – Penguin comes out

The Penguin update had been talked about for quite some time, as the update is designed to target spam and over-optimization. It picks up on things like keyword stuffing and abusive anchor texts.

May 2012 – Penguin 1.1 is rolled out

Google describes this update as ‘changes in algorithms designed to target websites that are not meeting quality standards and actively violating guidelines.’

The update also hits quite a few number of false positives and websites not guilty of any wrongdoing are also affected in terms of rankings.

June 2012 – Panda 3.7 comes out

Panda 3.7 has a bigger impact on search activity than Penguin according to some SEO experts although Google underplays the number and says only 1% of sites in the US and worldwide have been impacted.

June 2012 – Panda 3.8 rolls out silently

Panda 3.8 is a data only update with no changes in algorithm. Impact is minimal and somewhat unidentified.

July 2012 – Panda 3.9 is rolled out

Rankings seemed to fluctuate for 6 days while Google said it affected 1% of websites.

August 2012 – 7 results on SERPs and DMCA action

Google announces major changes in the month of August. Firstly, the main search page will only contain seven results as opposed to the earlier top ten. Secondly, Google will actively penalize websites which were repeat offenders when it came to copyright violations, using the DMCA takedown information as a tool.

September/October 2012 – Google puts out overlapping updates (EMD and the 20th Panda)

EMD, or the Exact Match Domain update, was designed to target just that – exact match domains. It became difficult for search engineonline watchdogs to understand whether the spikes in traffic they were seeing were due to a new Panda update or the announced EMD update. Shortly, the next day Google announced that a new Panda update had also been rolled out and the SEO community decided to put an end to 3.X naming system and name it Panda 20, since it was the twentieth update to come out. Panda 20 was a major update, with an impact on 3-4% of search activity including non-English searches.

October 2012 – Penguin 3 rolls outs silently

Penguin 3 was a minor update and had an impact on 0.3% of search activity that was in English.

November 2012 – Panda 21 and Panda 22 roll out

Having a smaller impact than Panda 20, Panda 21 affected around 1.2% of English-based search activity. Panda 22 was a data-only update of a minor nature.

December 2012 – Panda 23 rolls out around Christmas

Having a greater impact than the previous Panda 21 and 22, Panda 23 impacted 1.3-1.4% of search activity in English. Although Google quietly maintained that it was merely a refresh.

January 2013 – Panda 24 comes out

Panda 24 is officially announced by Google and immediately affects about 1.2% of search queries as per official sources from the search engine itself.

March 2013 – Panda 25 rolls out

Announced to be the last update before the Panda series as a whole is made part of the core algorithm itself, Panda 25 is considered a minor update. By this time, critics, and the SEO community in general, have started to lose patience with Google's seemingly endless entourage of updates, which they always have to be on the lookout for.

May 2013 – The Mysterious 'Phantom' Algorithm update is spotted

With its exact details unknown and close to no word from Google on what the changes in algorithm entail, a substantial amount of websites report heavy traffic losses around the time the Phantom update is seen to make an appearance.

End of May 2013 – Penguin 2.0 or Penguin 4 rolls out

Although there is a lot of talk about the new Penguin before it comes out, once it does the impact is quite modest. The precise details of the changes brought about by Penguin are not clear but there is some proof to suggest that it was more focused on the page level.

May 2014 – Panda 26 (or 4.0) rolls out, too much hue and cry

Panda 4.0 becomes the most high-impact update since the first Panda (the Farmer update) with its impact range being 7.5% of English search queries according to official figures and around 9% according to SEO monitor websites. It seems to be an algorithm update plus a data refresh too.

July 2014 – The Pigeon takes flight

Google releases what it calls the Pigeon update, which is meant to provide a better local search results experience by building a connection with Google Maps. It has a massive effect on business and SEOs immediately, since it creates very strong ties between the local algorithms and the core, adding to the list of various signals already used by Google to achieve ranking.

September 2014 – Panda 4.1 (or Panda 27) is rolled out slowly...very slowly

According to the search engine giant, this is a major update with a strong algorithmic portion. The approximate impact range predicted by Google is 3-5% of search queries, although those numbers are already starting to seem understated based on the feedback of webmasters and SEOs coming in.

According to Google, the latest Panda update will be the final one for quite some time and it is designed to create wider diversity in results by helping small to medium sized websites with high quality achieve better visibility. It is also supposed to help Google weed low-quality websites with more precision.

A majority of SEO experts are of the opinion that the latest Panda update is gentler, more empathetic and a result of Google learning its lessons from the previous updates and taking the feedback and complaints of webmaster, bloggers and site owners seriously. But only time will tell, as the wrongly affected websites post-Panda begin to make a recovery and flourish.

Now let's move towards the last section, where we discuss what all the chaos resulting from Panda and other updates means for you as a webmaster, blogger, business owner or SEO professional.

Getting ahead in the post-Panda internet world

The world of online publishing and search engine optimization keeps changing and if you do not learn the new game and get ahead of the curve, you will not only lose out; you might not get to play anymore.

Brief lesson for a radically new SEO environment

First of all, you have to realize that if you are a webmaster or anyone in charge of building better relationships with search engines to achieve visibility, your job has changed in a radical way and probably for the better. You are now answerable to users much more than the search engines, because Google itself will only rank you as high as the amount of favor you hold with users.

After these changes, building better relationships with search engines now means **building better relationships with online users**. The way to do that is focus on user experience.

Try to bring about a paradigm shift in your work and design philosophy, where you are working to entertain, inform, serve and provide convenience to users, since happy users are the best signal that you can send to a search engine. Clever keyword densities and running after links are not enough anymore. The search engines have moved on and you need to as well.

As an SEO professional or webmaster, you are now responsible for:

- Amazing design
- Responsive design
- User-experience
- High-quality content
- User related metrics
- Community building
- Interaction with the users
- Networking with other websites/blogs

So, in a sense, you are more of a webconsultant or strategist rather than someone who sits around figuring out how many times a keyword needs to be used and how you can convince somebody to spare you a link. The horizons of SEO have broadened immensely and in qualitative terms.

Another conceptual or cognitive change that needs to come about is that of ceasing to think of search engines as robotic machinery or wall of code that needs breached. Google is reinventing itself to reward high quality and well meant content that adds value to the internet and focuses on the needs and experience of users. If you can do that, you do not really need to worry about being slapped by a Panda update or getting lost in SERPs.

8

Link Building

8. Link Building

For the longest time imaginable, links have constituted an unofficial (but important) democracy on the internet, with a link holding the same kind of value in the eyes of search engines as a sort of vote that a certain website held value.

The importance of link building

When someone put a link to your website on their page, search engines interpreted that as the site owner saying “Here, this website is great” and of course it further mattered who was saying it. If WIRED magazine or Lonelyplanet.com linked your website, it would mean a sort of celebrity endorsement.

Therefore, due to being indicators of trust and authority, especially depending on where you were getting the link from, link building became an important factor in the list of search engine ranking factors. This influence was so great that it gave rise to the practice of link building in the SEO world and even took it to a notorious, spammy and almost black hat domain of SEO techniques such as link farming and abuse of anchor text, to name a few. Some SEO professionals and webmasters began to use linkbuilding in manipulative and deceptive ways to trick the algorithms into believing that they had more popularity and relevancy than they actually did.

And this is when Google decided that something had to be done, unleashing the many updates that have come the way of the SEO community ever since, starting with Panda, gaining dominance with Penguin and the latest being the EMD update. Once Google realized how link building was being abused by some black hat SEOs (and even some white hat SEOs) and how linking had become all about rigging the algorithm in your favor to create a false impression of how popular, important or trusted your site was, it decided that something had to be done to bring things back to a linkearning mentality and making SEOs and webmasters focus more on deserving links organically because of content and a diverse and committed user base.

Ever since this shift in paradigm and the emergence of penalties for websites that are stepping beyond the guidelines set by search engines, link building has changed fundamentally, in its philosophy and its practices both. This new paradigm, being encouraged by Google and facilitated by new filters in algorithms like the Penguin update, is transforming and already has transformed the world of SEO and how we think of optimizing. Whitehat can safely said to be the new blackhat. It is better to get ahead of the curve and embrace the changes in the online environment.

Links constitute an important source of acquiring attention, traction and traffic from search engines, especially if you are building relationships with popular websites and have linkpartners with authority and trust. And thus, for SEO professionals, linkbuilding is an essential task when it comes to pursuing engine ranking and satisfactory traffic. One cannot aim to comprehend the importance of link building unless you learn what it is. So let us see what linkbuilding really means.

Types of links

In the future, SEO professionals will probably understand the history of their field as divided into the era before Penguin and the era that began after Penguin update. And the reason behind this claim is already starting to become obvious, with a huge list of websites and even some big SEO companies being penalized heavily by search engines and having their linkbuilding strategies turn against them.

The game has changed fundamentally and unless you know what it is about now, you are not just risking failure, but being actively punished by search engines, which takes considerable time and effort to recover from. It has become an important concern for all SEO professionals and webmasters who, in the past, had nothing to lose with trying out different sundry techniques to pursue rankings. Now avoiding penalties and setting off the new algorithm filters is top priority for everybody looking to optimize.

Remember, it is pretty much all about quality now. SEOs may have been able to pass off low-quality content and websites with clever link building techniques in the past, but that time has come to a pretty definite end, or is coming towards that. In this section, we will be looking at what types of links you will want to build, what types you will want to avoid unless you can pull them off well and what types you need to run away from.

Natural (or editorial) links

These links are essentially what every SEO aspires to and are the consequence of real optimization. Editorial links are basically links that other people have made to your site on their own, out of their own choice, thus the word editorial being used.

Google loves these kinds of links and rightly so, as they are well deserved and take time and hard work. After all, you will need to give a blogger, a webmaster or a popular influential website a very good reason as to why they should link to you of their own. This good reason can be (and usually is) a unique piece of content that no one else has and which once shared, will find its way onto other blogs and websites.

Manual (or outreach) links

These are the kind of links that SEOs are usually expected to get for websites. Manual link building involves reaching out to the owners of websites or blog writers and asking to be linked by them. Now, of course, you will need to provide some solid reasoning and it will take some convincing on your part. And it goes without saying that it would be easier to convince people who are connected to your field.

Self-promotional (non editorial) links

Now these really are the outcasts of the link world or are fast becoming so and not without good reason. Although back in their heydays, before the Penguin era, a lot of people did a fair amount of linkbuilding using this technique because it was possible to con algorithms into believing content was relevant when it really was not. But beware, Google has smartened up and these sorts of links are not only void of value now, they actually trip up filters in algorithms and you can be heavily penalized by Google. Though they should not be used at all anymore, if you find you cannot do without them, make sure you use locations that are un-moderated whether they are directories, comment sections or forums.

Starting a link building campaign

Like any other campaign, it all starts with determining the objectives or goals of the campaign. A few words on this and then we will have a look at what linkbuilding can look like.

Keep in mind that although what you are doing is called linkbuilding, you are actually involved in a kind of online marketing, for which planning always starts with objectives or goals. Your objectives should be first of all realistic and relevant. Realistic meaning that they should be achievable in the kind of time frame you have in mind and with the resources you already possess. Relevant means that linkbuilding should, preferably, not be a goal in itself but rather lead on to the bigger road to achieving some form of success or progress for your business, organization or individual you are promoting.

For example, get links from 15 popular blogs, sounds like a nice goal to have, but will this have an effect on the overall growth of your business or organization? Do you have the content ready to convert this new traffic into users or customers, or to maintain a long-term relationship with these new visitors? Suppose you have 200 new visitors during the first week, but your website had no content in that time and most of the visitors had a quick look and left unimpressed. Did your goal achieve anything in the bigger picture? It actually did some harm,

because quite possibly most of those users will not come again even after you improve your content, because they will think, 'Yeah I remember the site, I was not too pleased'.

So setting objectives is key to starting out right, because if you do not, anything you do after that might be effort, time and resources spent in the wrong direction, a direction which might even do you harm.

Lastly, remember that although linkbuilding is a part of online marketing, it is different in the sense of the time span of its results, which are not going to be instantaneous as opposed to putting up an online advertisement or a television commercial. This does not mean that your campaign has failed. Neither should you promise instantaneous results for any website that you do perform linkbuilding for.

What are your assets?

Like barter in old times, if you are going to get links from other people, you need to have something that they are interested in as well – the reason that a blogger or a website owner would care about what you have to give; something that attracts them enough to put up a link for you. That reason is what we call an asset and it will differ from one website to another, and it also depends on whether you are a business, an organization or an individual. Assets need to be relevant for the people you want to attract. Below are a few examples of what an asset could be:

- Data
- Content
- Products
- Services
- Community

Lastly, remember that money is no longer an asset you can offer in linkbuilding. Although some might say it never was a preferable one to begin with. Google actively penalizes SEOs, websites and/or individuals involved in buying links.

Links come in many flavors

Next, you will need to plan what kind of links you need and in what sort of mixture. Linkbuilding offers the opportunity to implement many kinds of linking, depending on the needs of a campaign. From deep-linking which involves making links to pages deep within a site structure, to a specific product or piece of content, to brand-linking which means creating links that

contain your brand information/the name of your company. You can come up with a sketch of your requirements after you do a complete analysis of your website and link profile. Be on the lookout for areas of improvement and innovation. Here are a few examples of the kind of linking to choose from:

- Links to your homepage/mainpage
- Deep linking
- Brand linking
- Links that contain target keywords

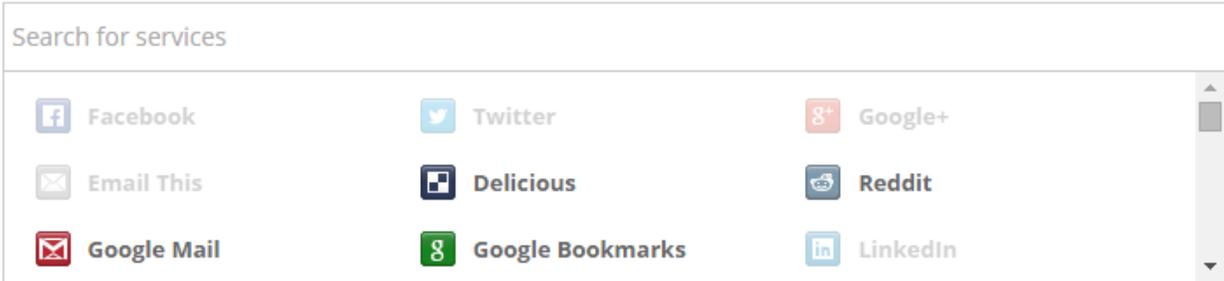
It is good to build a campaign with a diverse linking strategy for optimum results and a more comprehensive link profile.

Social links

As long as we are discussing types of links, we have to mention so-called social links. These are the links from social networks. Even though they are not as relevant and powerful as links posted on other websites, it is speculated that social links do have some value in determining ranking, as they can indicate the level of quality of a certain page. If a certain page is shared a lot of times on social networks, it means that it provides some kind of value, and this usually indicates high-quality or original content.

This is one of the reasons why social media marketing has become an important part of online marketing, and thus it can be related to search engine optimization.

Besides being present on social media and engaging with your followers, another way to encourage social sharing directly from your website is to use social sharing buttons, which can be installed as a [plug-in](#) on your website.



Looking for your people

Now that you are on your way and ready to start your campaign, you will need to think about the type of people you will be contacting to ask for links and attract as linkpartners. It is best to make sure that whomever you reach out to is someone who is interested in whatever your content is, since reaching out to people randomly leads to a low response rate and even lower ratio of success.

One of the ways to ensure better responses is to place 'hooks' in your content. No, you will not need a hammer for this. A hook is something that makes a potential linker interested or committed to giving your content a fair chance, an element that makes the viewer stay put and wants to finish what you have to show, share or say. Here are examples of a few hooks:

- Interesting news
- Ego-bait
- Humor/Funny
- Controversial/Edgy/Brazen
- Data visualization
- Competition
- Audiovisual content

Social mediawebsites, like Facebook or LinkedIn, are great places for you to get a feel for how people are spending their time in virtual space and how what they are sharing with others. Identify patterns in the content being passed on and try to work those elements into hooks, which you place in your own content.

Once you feel you have come up with a potential list of people who might be interested in linking to your website, you can search for that list creatively on a search engine. So, for example, if one of the target linkers you have identified is a travel blogger, you search for a list of travel blogs and then use a tool like the [Scrapers plug-in on Chrome](#) to get all of those URLs copied off the results page in one go and paste them on to a working page on email or a spreadsheet.

Use a tool like [URL Opener](#) to open all the sites with one go. Look for any contact info on the sites, which could be email address, Twitter or LinkedIn account, Facebook page, etc.

Tools like [Followerwonk](#) will allow you to search Twitter bios and accounts for keywords of your choice. So, if your website is about cigars and pipes, offering products and reviews, you could look for keywords like *cigar aficionado* with *blogger* or *pipe enthusiast* with *blogger* or just *tobaccoblogger* or *cigar blogger* to get a list of people with Twitter accounts who have blogs related to your own content. You then download these results into a spreadsheet.

followerwonk »
A Moz app

SIGN IN WITH 
Link your Moz account

Search bios Compare users Analyze Track followers Sort followers

Who are you looking for? Whether it's new talent, customers, or just friends, we help find whom you're after.

 search Twitter profiles **Do it**

Examples: thought leaders?, startups, oldest accounts, VPs, geniuses?, dads, managers, environmentalists

Twitter users with "tobacco blogger" in their profiles

Showing 1 - 11 of 11 results (order by **relevance**)

No filters	tweets	following	followers	days old	Social Authority
  Edward smokes @taxfreecig United States, Cyprus, Israel #Vaper from NY here. MCSE, #Veteran, SPC '07, '04XL1200C, #Libertarian, #RoundUp kills #bees & #humans. Say NO to GMOs! Blogger , Non-GMO tobacco & gun friendly.	3,735	10,583	18,485	1,229	61
  Matt from TRR @MandMSportshow Tobacco Road Official Editor for http://t.co/f7shbJz1vh and Undeafated on ESPN Blogger Throwdown. Expert on ACC Sports. PT Cornhole Builder #UNC #GOHEELS #ACC #NCSU	31,931	1,840	837	1,551	46
  Eric @smokingapipe Hawaii Pipe tobacco enthusiast and blogger . http://t.co/VSZldQcR88 http://t.co/h20Gu6tTf1	429	72	526	2,275	1
  John Watson @RationalWatson	2,956	339	408	563	1

Next, you will want to find out as much as possible about these potential link partners you have come up with to help you craft a message that is as personalized and relevant as possible. Do not send out emails that seem like automated messages with a template. Think of this as SEO for a person rather than a search engine. You will want each person to like you as much as possible if you are to entertain hopes of having a high success rate with your list.

It is also efficient to sort the link targets in the order of priority when doing your outreach. Of course, they will have varying importance and priority in terms of how much Page or Domain Authority they have. Secondly, they might be sorted based on how many followers they have on social media. Lastly, their relevance to your specific field may also be a factor in prioritizing.

An advisable minimum Page Authority for your targets would be 1 and for Domain Authority a figure of 25. They can be lower or higher depending how long your list is. Use [MozBar tool](#) to determine the Page and Domain Authority of a website.

The screenshot shows a Google search for "tobacco blogger" with approximately 4,930,000 results. Three search results are highlighted with green boxes, each featuring a Moz Link Analysis tool overlay. The first result is "Tobacco Truth" from rodutobaccotruth.blogspot.com/, dated Jan 5, 2015. The second result is "The Rest of the Story: Tobacco News Analysis and ..." from tobaccoanalysis.blogspot.com/, dated 15 hours ago. The third result is "Pro-Tobacco Bloggers - TobaccoTactics" from www.tobaccotactics.org/index.php/Pro-Tobacco_Bloggers, dated Oct 24, 2012. Each overlay displays the Moz PA (Page Authority) and DA (Domain Authority) scores, the number of links, and a "Link Analysis" button.

Rank	PA	Links	DA
1)	55	1,625	93
2)	70	8,850	93
3)	1	0	40

Also be very careful when using generic greetings like 'Hi Webmaster' or 'Dear Blogger'. They might associate your email with automated spam that they are used to receiving.

A good message will contain the following if possible:

- The other person's name
- A great subject line
- A detailed or specific comment about their work
- The use of an authentic email signature
- Disclosure of your own current location

It is also best to avoid using one of these famous, free email addresses from Google or Yahoo! as they are also mostly used by spammers unfortunately.

Lastly, remember to follow up with the bloggers and website owners you are targeting as they probably receive a lot of emails, making it difficult to keep track of them all. Do not let negative

responses get you down and instead, ask for feedback about your content. A blogger might not like your current content but they might like something in the future.

Link building tactics

There is not just one way to get links. A large variety of methods exist. You will need to decide on tactics that fit your SEO context. Some fields or industries have tendencies towards more aggressive types of linkbuilding and focus on eliminating competition, while others might foster a more communal spirit and build a network of blogs and forums with like-minded developers. Whatever your linkbuilding needs may be, we will be looking at link tactics that have wide applicability for all kinds of online contexts.

Content-centered linking

The essence of content-centered or content-based linking is to attempt to acquire links through the development of assets, which are basically different types of content. Let us have a look at what they could be:

- A data visualization
- An image gallery
- An infographic
- Videos
- A how-to guide

It is preferable to create content that becomes your asset, while keeping your target linkpartners in mind – People who will find your content (your asset) attractive because it is funny, informative, interesting, thrilling, etc. Most of all, they should find it relevant to their blogs, websites or who and what they stand for as members of the internet community. You then reach out to contact these people and convince them to link to you.

Eventually, you will want to come to a place where every link you acquire will not be a link you asked for, but rather be handed links by a prominent members of your community who influence others and help you gain popularity. Although it is a long-term strategy and one which demands top-notch content, it is very much possible.

Guest blogging

Guest blogging can be defined as the practice of reaching out to other bloggers or website owners to find out if they will publish content that is yours. Although it is technically not illicit

and can be a great way to acquire links from trustworthy sources, some SEOs and marketers misused this tactic and employed sub-standard content alongside spammy anchor text, forcing Google to put its foot down and punish the abusers of guest blogging.

Broken link building

Sometimes, it is easier to fix things that are broken rather than building new ones to replace them. Broken linkbuilding is one practice that follows the above mentioned principle. The World Wide Web is fairly abundant in broken links and a smart SEO professional should see an opportunity where others see ruins of a oncegreatlink. Broken linkbuilding, now a favorite linkbuilding tactic of many, works through identifying broken links on the internet, and aiding troubled webmasters in replacing them with a better link which benefits the new guy.

A lot of these broken links are found on websites of great quality and value, so having an opportunity to fix a broken link in your favor is almost synonymous to getting a gift.

The general itinerary of a broken link building exercise will look something like this:

- Search for broken links and identify targets of value
- Create content to impress the respective webmaster
- Conduct outreach and (fingers crossed) enjoy your free link!

To polish up your broken link building skills, look for resources online to help you out. You will find many. There is an excellent one by the name of [The Broken Link Building Bible](#).

Ego-bait

The ego-bait link building tactic is pretty straightforward. It involves using content that pivots on the egos of the people you are seeking to get links from. This content can be material that is either flattering to the webmaster or site owner in question, or hold unique and deep interest for them.

For example, you can find a list of sport bloggers and then develop a piece of content centered on contemporary sport blogging and some influential examples. All you need to do is insert some kind of direct or indirect reference to the blogger being targeted into the piece of content and then conduct outreach and watch human psychology do its magic.

The usual itinerary for an ego-bait link building project will generally look like this:

Develop concept and decide targets → Create Content → Conduct Outreach → Follow up

Although a good tactic for acquiring links of highvalue from bloggers with many followers and online power players, which can help your traffic tremendously, it will not result in a large quantum of links.

Link building metrics

It is good to be conscious of as many metrics as possible that are related to links. Knowledge regarding these metrics can help you when you want to deduce the value of a link, conduct an analysis of a link profile and allocate resources for the pursuit of a certain link. A working knowledge of metrics can also be helpful when it comes to analyzing the link profile of a competitor's website.

Domain and page strength (authority)

Domain strength is the cumulative worth of an entire domain rather than that of individual pages. The domain is considered as a whole to analyze how strong it is. When written down, it is either called Domain Authority or the homepage's Page Authority. Google calculates a measure of its own called PageRank and it is calculated using the value and quantity of links that lead to a webpage. It measures on a range of 1-10 with 10 being the highest. Even though PageRank is technically a measure of how strong the homepage is, it can still be used to calculate the value of the website since links usually point to the homepage and from there, juice flows to the other pages of that website.

The other unit of domain strength is Domain Authority (DA) and it is maintained by Moz. DA is based on a variety of signals sourced from Moz's crawler and attempts to calculate how well a website will do on a search engine's rankings. It measures on a range of 1-100 with 100 being the upper limit.

Both these metrics can help in link building by aiding you in selecting strong sites over weaker ones.

Similar to DA, Moz has another metric called Page Authority, which measures the strength of a particular page rather than the whole website of which it is a part. The better the Page Authority of a webpage is, the more helpful it is going to be in terms of SEO.

Open Site Explorer

Updated December 04, 2014

URL:

Hide Metrics

Authority

DOMAIN AUTHORITY [Ⓢ]	PAGE AUTHORITY [Ⓢ]
99 /100	93 /100

Page Link Metrics

JUST-DISCOVERED [Ⓢ]	ESTABLISHED LINKS [Ⓢ]
5,651 60 Days	2,935 Root Domains
	57,327 Total Links

Anchor Text

You may know what anchor text is by now, but let us have a look at how it functions as a metric.

Anchor text provides clues through the keywords used in them, as to what a page that is being linked to might contain as content. Google can then make use of that in algorithms and decide if the page should be ranked higher for that certain keyword.



📷 Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam. Photograph: JL Marshall

Late Rembrandt, Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam

12 February-17 May

It may be hard for another artist to get their head in the game in Amsterdam amid all the [Vincent Van Gogh anniversary events](#) (2015 marks 125 years since the post-impressionist's death) but none stands a better chance than Rembrandt. The

For a long time, having more and more links lead to you with your keyword in the anchor text meant good news for ranking. However, the importance of anchor text as a signal for ranking might be getting lesser and lesser. This is courtesy of all those who optimized anchor texts to death and also due to the rise of Penguin which seeks to actively penalize such SEO behavior.

It is best not to create many links, which have too many similarities or identical words in the anchor text. This is especially true for links that might not be of the best quality and do not reflect well on your website.

Number of links

Part and parcel of linkbuilding is to keep track of how many links you possess. You may want to compare it with the link profile and any progress of your competitor, to see how well you are doing. As a metric, number of links can help us keep track of two things:

- Measuring the progress of a link build campaign
- To conduct a comparison between your site and those of competitors

URL:

 **Hide Metrics**

Authority

DOMAIN AUTHORITY ⓘ PAGE AUTHORITY ⓘ

99 /100 **93** /100

Page Link Metrics

JUST-DISCOVERED ⓘ ESTABLISHED LINKS ⓘ

5,651 60 Days **2,935** Root Domains

57,327 Total Links

Inbound Links

Gauge a site's influence. See inbound links to the page, subdomain, or root domain you've

Target ⓘ

Link Source ⓘ

Link Type ⓘ 

all links

all links

link equity

no link equity

only follow

only rel=nofollow

only 301

only 302

1 - 50 Inbound Links

Title and URL of Linking Page	Link Anchor
BBC News - Scottish independence: Salmond and Da www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-scotland-scotland-politics	The Guardia www.thegua
KURIER at	Guardian

However, you will need to keep in mind that all links are not equal and the quality of links matters as much as the quantity of links. It is possible for one link to bring in more traffic than a five links put together, due to its location and strength.

Position of Links

If you are a webmaster, and there is a link that you are very committed to sharing with others, and making sure that people visit, where in your website would you embed it? Somewhere that is the most visible, right? Well, Google has worked out how the positions of links matter, so a link to your website, which is on the footer or in a side bar of the page will not matter as much as a link found in the top or the main body of the page.

Google also calculates the aggregate of your link position. So if most of your links are always found in the footer of a website, it will not have positive effect on your ranking or sitestrength, because Google will figure that your website might not be that great for users, because if it was, why would it be linked in the footer? So, it is better to make sure that your links are not predominantly in areas of pages which do not reflect very well on the quality of your website. Try to get links which give you an in-content position rather than on the side bar or on the bottom of the page.

Good link building vs. bad link building

Like everything else in the world of SEO, linkbuilding is also a matter of quality, standards and ethics. You remember how we discussed the difference between blackhat SEO and whitehat SEO, plus the buffer zone between them sometimes referred to as greyhat SEO. In this part of the chapter, we will be looking at what blackhat and whitehat techniques have to offer and their downsides.

White hat link building

Whitehat link building comes with very few pitfalls or traps and the odds of running into penalties or loss of traffic are virtually minimal, as they work well with the guidelines set down by search engines like Google or Yahoo!. The advantages of whitehat link building are firstly that you do not have to worry about being penalized by search engines, either due to automated filters designed to pick up spammers or being punished manually because you have been noticed. Secondly, whitehat link building ensures a more secure future and helps you in the development of assets that sit well with actual users, delivering results that are less likely to vanish one fine morning.

However, there are a few disadvantages to playing it nice. Whitehat tactics focus on the bigger picture and the long run so are not very good at providing quick fixes or instantaneous results, which you might need sometimes. Since whitehat strategies are not as aggressive as their cousins in black, they usually take their sweet time in having a significant impact on traffic generation and profits.

Below are a few examples of what whitehat strategies may look like:

- Developing creative, unique and thoughtful content that is based on user-empathy.
- Creating an authentic online community that is engaging and productive, allowing users to interact with the site and with other users.

- Promotion of one's website to relevant individuals and blogs through outreach that is personal and heartfelt.

Blackhat link building

Blackhat started out as a euphemism for hackers, but in the context of the SEO world, it signifies the use of techniques or practices that lie outside the guidelines and limits set by search engines and can sometimes constitute serious violations that can jeopardize the reputation and functioning of a website or business. The essence of all blackhat strategies is to find weak areas in the search engine algorithms or coding of spiders and gain rankings for websites, which are not deserving of them.

Although blackhat strategies can deliver surprising results in a very short while, without the need of actual content development or earning links and building relationships with other bloggers or website owners, these successes are normally also short lived because search engines are on the constant look out to combat blackhat SEO practices. Once caught, it usually results in heavy penalties, loss of traffic, bruising of reputation and trust, and the obvious farewell to rankings gained. Since recovering from penalties and bad blood with the search engines can be a tedious affair, it is best to avoid blackhat techniques as any benefits gained are not worth the risks.

The importance of staying on the white side

When you begin an online enterprise, you envision a set-up that has value, growth potential and sustainability, years into the coming future. In order for this to happen, it is crucial to chart out a strategy that delivers long term results, ensures survival and carries the least threats and risks of disaster or failure. This is as true for businesses or organizations off the web as it is for those online.

In the context of businesses and interests on the internet, this is not possible without a healthy, sustainable and co-operative relationship with search engines that only whitehat strategies can promise. Whitehat tactics ensure that you do not have to be on the constant alert when it comes to penalties from search engines or having all your efforts wasted overnight and losing valuable traffic and revenue along with it. You will find that most successful businesses cannot risk having their site down for even one day.

Secondly, whitehat development brings an actual positive contribution to the internet, the field you are involved in and to the lives of your users and their online experience. You cannot expect to have a committed community of customers that you can rely on, not just

for purchases or visits but also referring you to others, if you do not have a strategy that is centered on creating a positive user experience. One of the best ways, if not the best way, to do this is promising them content that has utility, authenticity and is enjoyable.

Practices to avoid

Here are things to avoid if you want to stick to white hat SEO practices:

- Link Purchases

First of all, you should be very clear on the matter of link buying being directly and explicitly against Google's guidelines, and is such a serious violation that Google does not shy away from penalizing mega-businesses like JC Penny or Mercedes. So whether you're a few months old start-up or a relatively successful and sizeable business, link buying has serious repercussions and will usually result in more harm than any possible good.

Google is concerned with websites performing well in search results because they have earned it rather than because they can afford to pay for it. This is a philosophy which actually works in your favor if you are a small business with a relatively low budget for advertising or SEO. These measures are in place to separate the finance and popularity of websites so that the internet remains a democratic place, which relies on content, not money, for flourishing.

- Penalties for blackhat practices

Google has made an example out of many big businesses, in an effort to discourage blackhat strategies, and show that penalties are for everybody and carry no exceptions. A penalty could range from a few days to weeks to an indefinite period during which you must fix the problem and convince Google that you are contrite and that the penalty should be lifted.

Some penalties are manually applied by a Google team member because they notice a violation while others might be sanctioned automatically by algorithms because an element on your website has tripped a filter link in the Penguin or Panda updates. Interflora, which is the largest florist company in the UK, was penalized in February 2013 for practices related to blackhat linking. The penalty lasted eleven days and led to serious PR and revenue damage to Interflora.

- Linktrading

Link trading was once a useful practice through which similar websites with relevant content could make link exchanges to improve visibility and rankings. However, like many other once legit practices, this too was overused and abused by a large number of SEOs and links began to

be traded, without regard to quality or relevance. This has led to Google taking a firm stance on what they call 'excessive link exchanging', which can be penalized too. The concern, again, was that links should be earned by a blogger or webmaster and not be acquired by easy methods such as link exchange sites, where hundreds of links are put up on a website while having no relation or reason to be there.

This of course does not mean that Google cannot tell the difference between positive or necessary uses of exchanging links, like bloggers regularly sharing each other's content and making agreements to support each other in gaining audiences and visibility.

Tips and tricks to help you with link building

Here are a few tricks and tips that will help you out in your linkbuilding endeavors.

- Using lists

In the process of link building, you will come across situations where you will need to find data in bulk when you are doing manual outreach to potential link partners. Rather than searching using a query like 'Baking Blogs', it helps speed things up if you search for 'list of baking blogs'. This way you will end up with results of ready-made lists curated by others.

- Locate bloggers with Followerwonk

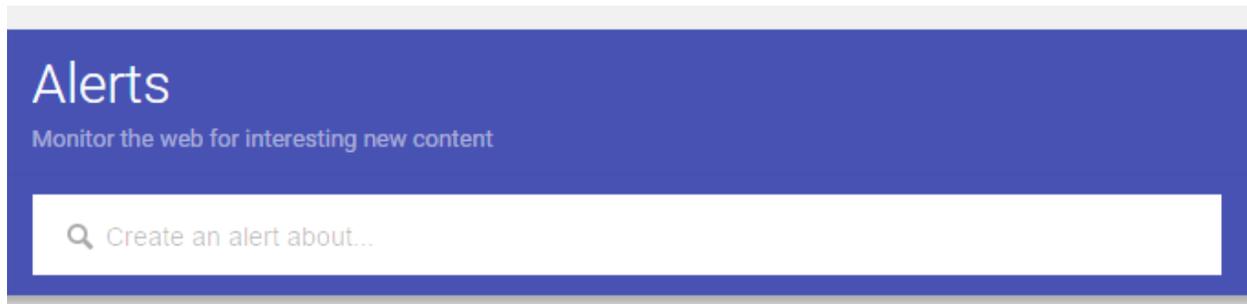
Although we mentioned this earlier, here is a quick recap. You can use Followerwonk to search the bios of Twitter users for words of your choice. To look for bloggers, you can simply add a word next to 'blogger' depending on what kind of blog writer you are looking for.

- Earning links from your competition

This might sound crazy, but it is possible. And no, that is not a typo. It is supposed to say competition. Here is how you do it. Basically, you create an award or a competition and you intentionally hand it out to your top competition, those who rank well in the keywords you are combating for. No one turns down a free award or publicity for a competition they have won and they will link back to the source. Which will, of course, be a domain that is actually yours and you can 301 direct it to your own website. Now that is using competition to your advantage.

- Make sure you round up all the pages that mention you but do not link to you

This one is quite simple. There are several instances of people mentioning or writing about a blog or website, without giving a link to it. You can use all the major search engines to find these un-linked mentions by typing your URL in the search box, with and without the http. Another tool you can use for this purpose is [Google Alerts](#).



- Get Links through expert reviews

One of the best ways for getting links is to find products or services that are new and in good need of some write-ups, and then write an expert review, which is favorable. Chances are you will get an editorial link in no time, as long as your review is impressive and with some necessary detail.

9

Search Engine Tools and Services for Webmasters

9. Search Engine Tools and Services for Webmasters

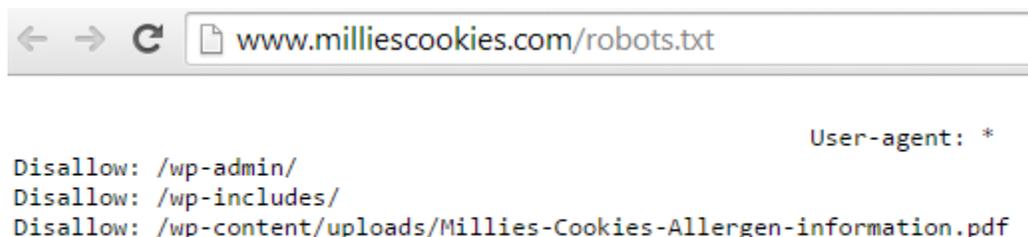
While the SEO community is significantly involved in innovation and creation of more and more tools for use by SEO professionals, businesses and organizations looking to self-optimize, a large variety of tools and services are provided by search engines themselves to facilitate webmasters in their SEO endeavors. Google, for example, has a whole range of tools, analytics and advisory content specifically for webmasters looking to enhance their relationships with the search engine giant and optimize their websites in line with Google's recommendations. After all, who understands search engine optimization better than search engines themselves?

Search engine protocols

Let us look at a detailed list of search engine protocols:

The robots exclusion protocol

This protocol functions through the robots.txt file, which is usually found in the root directory of a website (e.g. www.milliescookies.com/robots.txt). It provides directives to web crawlers and spiders (that are automated) regarding a range of issues such as guiding bots as to where they can find sitemap data, what areas of a website are off limits or disallowed and should not be crawled, and give parameters for crawl delay.



```
← → ↻ 📄 www.milliescookies.com/robots.txt

User-agent: *
Disallow: /wp-admin/
Disallow: /wp-includes/
Disallow: /wp-content/uploads/Millies-Cookies-Allergen-information.pdf
```

Here is a list of commands that can be used to instruct the robots:

Disallow

It stops the robots from going near certain pages or folders on a website.

Crawl delay

It provides robots the rate (in milliseconds) at which they should crawl pages on a server.

Sitemap

Shows robots where they can find the sitemap and files related to it.

Beware: While most robots are nice and compliant, there are some rogue robots designed with mal intentions that do not follow the protocol and thus will not adhere to the directives found in robots.txt files. Such robots can be used by some horrible individuals to steal private information and access content not meant for them. To safeguard against this, it is best not to leave the address of administrative sections or private areas of an otherwise public website in the robots.txt file. Alternatively, the Meta robots tag can be used for such pages to instruct search engines that they should not crawl these pages. You can find out more about the meta robots tag further in this chapter.

Google Webmaster tools can be used to access and analyze search engine protocols of your website.

The screenshot shows the Google Webmaster Tools interface. At the top, there is a navigation bar with "Webmaster Tools" on the left, a search box, and "Help" and "Settings" dropdown menus on the right. A left-hand sidebar contains a list of navigation items: "Site Dashboard", "Site Messages", "Search Appearance", "Search Traffic", "Google Index", "Crawl" (highlighted with a green arrow), "Crawl Errors", "Crawl Stats", "Fetch as Google", "robots.txt Tester" (highlighted in red), "Sitemaps", "URL Parameters", "Security Issues", and "Other Resources". The main content area is titled "robots.txt Tester" and includes a link to "Edit your robots.txt and check for errors. Learn more." Below this, it shows the "Latest version seen on 1/5/15, 3:50 AM OK (200) 865 Bytes" with a link to "See live robots.txt". A scrollable list of disallow directives is shown, numbered 16 to 29, including paths like /cache/, /cli/, /components/, /images/, /includes/, /installation/, /language/, /libraries/, /logs/, /media/, /modules/, /plugins/, /templates/, and /tmp/. At the bottom of the list, it indicates "0 Errors" and "0 Warnings" with a "Submit" button. At the very bottom of the interface, there is a form to "Enter a URL to test if it is blocked", a dropdown menu set to "Googlebot", and a red "TEST" button.

Sitemap

Sitemap can be thought of as treasure map that guides search engines on the best way to crawl your website. Sitemap aids search engines in locating and classifying the content on a website which, embarrassingly enough, they would have had a tough time doing by themselves. There

are a variety of formats used to keep sitemaps in and they can show the way to different forms of content, whether they are audio-visual, mobile version files or news.

A tool called XML-Sitemaps.com can be used to create your own sitemap in a friendly and easy manner.

Get it done in 4 Simple Steps

- 1 Enter your full website URL and some optional parameters in the form below.
- 2 Press 'Start' button and wait until the site is completely crawled.
- 3 You will be redirected to the generated sitemap details page, including number of pages, broken links list, XML file content and link to a sitemap file. Download the sitemap file using that link and put it into the domain root folder of your site.
- 4 Go to your [Google Webmaster account](#) and add your sitemap URL.

Please enter details for sitemap generation +

Starting URL

Please enter the full http address for your site, only the links within the starting directory will be included.

Change frequency ?

None ▾

Last modification ?

None

Use server's response

Use this date/time:

Priority ?

None Automatically Calculated Priority

Check your settings and click button below

Maximum 500 pages will be indexed in sitemap

Need to index more? Check our [Standalone version of Google sitemap generator](#) with unlimited number of pages for crawler.

There are three formats in which sitemaps usually exist:

- RSS

There is a somewhat amusing debate over whether RSS should stand for Really Simple Syndication or Rich Site Summary. It is an XML dialect and quite convenient in terms of maintenance since they can be coded to have automated update properties with the addition of new content. However, a downside to RSS is that their management is difficult when compared with other formats, due to those very updating qualities.

- XML

XML stands for Extendable Markup Language, but at the time of creation, someone decided that XML sounds cooler than EML, so the initials just stuck. XML is the recommended format by most search engines and website design gurus and it is no coincidence that it is also the most commonly used format. Being significantly more passable by search engines, it can be created by a large number of sitemap generators. It also provides the best granular control of parameters for a page.

However, the downside of that very last quality mentioned, is that the file sizes for XML sitemaps are usually quite heavy in comparison to other formats.

- .TXT File

The .txt format is miraculously easy to use and uses one URL for each line and goes up to 50,000 lines. Sadly though, it does not allow the adding of meta elements to pages.

Meta bots

You can use the meta robots tag to provide instructions for search engine robots that apply to one page at a time. This tag is included in the head area of the HTML file.

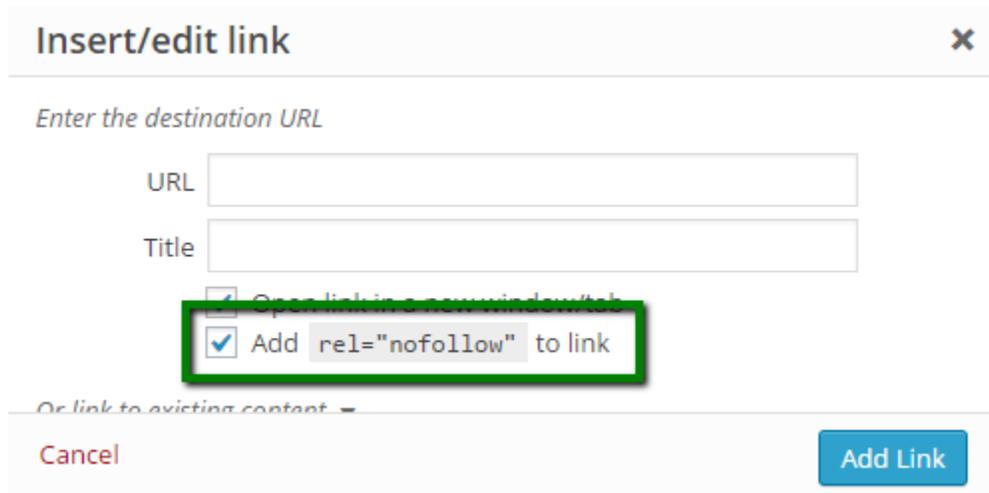
Here is an example of a meta tag for search engine bots:

```
<html>
<head>
  <title>A Collection of the Coolest Cheetah Videos</title>
  <meta name="ROBOTS" content="NOINDEX, NOFOLLOW">
</head>
<body>
  <h1>Welcome Cheetah Lovers</h1>
</body>
</html>
```

The above tag instructs spiders and other bots not to index this page and also not to follow the links found on this page. You can find out more about the types of meta tags above in the section on meta tags found in Chapter 3.

The nofollowattribute

You may remember the discussion on nofollow links in Chapter 3. You can go back for a detailed study of the rel="nofollow" attribute and its uses, to the entire section dedicated to their discussion. To summarize them here, we can say that nofollow links allow you to link to a page without passing on any linkjuice and thus your vote or approval for the benefit of search engines. Although search engines will abide by your wishes not to have those links be given value, they might still follow them for their own reasons of discovery – to unearth new areas of the internet.



Insert/edit link ✕

Enter the destination URL

URL

Title

Open link in a new window?

Add rel="nofollow" to link

Or link to existing content ▾

Cancel Add Link

The canonical tag

It is possible to end up with any number of different URLs that lead to identical pages of identical content. This may seem like not that big of a deal, but it has unhelpful repercussions for site owners and SEOs looking to enhance ratings and page value. This is due to the very simple reason, as discussed earlier, that search engines aren't yet all that smart as we would like them to be and they might read the following as four pages rather than one, leading to a devaluation of the content divided by four and a lowering of rankings. Think of it as juice being divided into four glasses instead of one big mug.

Is this one page or four different ones:

- <http://www.notarealwebsite.com>
- <http://notarealwebsite.com>

- <http://www.notarealwebsite.com/default.asp>
- <http://notarealwebsite.com/default.asp>

The canonical tag is used to inform search engines about which one to count as the 'authoritative' one for the purpose of results. This makes the search engine understand that they are all versions of the same page and only one URL should be counted for ranking purposes while the other should be assimilated into it.

Search engine myths and misconceptions

Let us be honest, we have all heard our fair share of SEO legends, which even after being debunked and proven untrue, still linger with doubts in our minds. Here is a collection of a few to help you separate fallacies from facts.

Using keywords like stuffing turkeys

This is one of the oldest and most persistent fallacies of the SEO world and seems to be invincible. You might recall seeing pages that may look something like this:

"Welcome to McSmith's Amazing Spicy Chicken, where you'll find the best Amazing Spicy Chicken that you've ever had. If you like Amazing Spicy Chicken, then McSmith's Amazing Spicy Chicken is the only place for you to enjoy Amazing Spicy Chicken. McSmith's – Amazing Spicy Chicken for the whole family"

Shoddy SEO work like that will not only make you lose your appetite but also make you never want to see Amazing Spicy Chicken ever again in your life. The myth behind this sad SEO technique is that stuffing a page, its title, anchor text and prominent content with as much keywords as possible is the magical key to getting top rankings on search engines. And unfortunately, a lot of SEOs still think it is true and there are SEO tools still out there that emphasize the importance of keyword density and its use by search engine algorithms. This is flat out false.

Search engines actually admire keywords being used with intelligence, moderation and relevance. Do not waste your time calculating mathematical formulae and counting keywords. The only thing you will achieve is annoying visitors and looking like a spammer.

Improving organic results with paid results

This is pure fiction. It was never possible and it will never be. Even companies, which might be spending millions in search engine advertising, still have to battle over organic results and they

receive no extra support or the slightest nudge in rankings when it comes to organic results, despite using paid results.

Google, Yahoo! and Bing, all exercise strong separation between departments to safeguard against this kind of crossover and risk the legitimacy of the whole search engine machinery. If an SEO tells you they can help you perform this 'miracle', move very slowly towards the nearest exit and then run.

The metatag myths

Okay, this one we will admit used to be true and did work quite well for a while, but it has not been part of the rankings equation for a considerable period of time. A long time ago, search engines used to allow you to use the meta keyword tag to insert relevant keywords from your content so that when a user's keywords matched yours, you would automatically come up in the query.

However, the same class of people who helped the rise of myth number one, used this SEO method to the limit of a spamming overdose and it did not take long for the search engines to regret what they had done and take this method off the algorithms. So be warned, once and for all. This method does not work anymore. Anyone who tells you that SEO is really about meta tagging, is still living in the previous decade.

Measuring and tracking success

It is said to be a universal rule of management sciences that whatever is measurable, only that is possible to change. Although not true enough to be an exclusionary statement, it does apply greatly to the field of search engine optimization. Successful SEOs are known to practice strong tracking and regard measurement to play a pivotal role in success and creating better strategies.

Here are a few metrics you will want to measure and keep regular track of:

1. Search engine share of traffic

It is crucial to be mindful of what source of traffic has contributed how much to the traffic on your website on a monthly basis. These sources are usually classified into four groups based on where the traffic originated:

- Direct navigation

These are people who just typed in your URL and landed on your homepage, or those who had kept you in their bookmarks for example or have been referred by a friend on chat or email. The referrals through emails are not trackable.

- Referral traffic

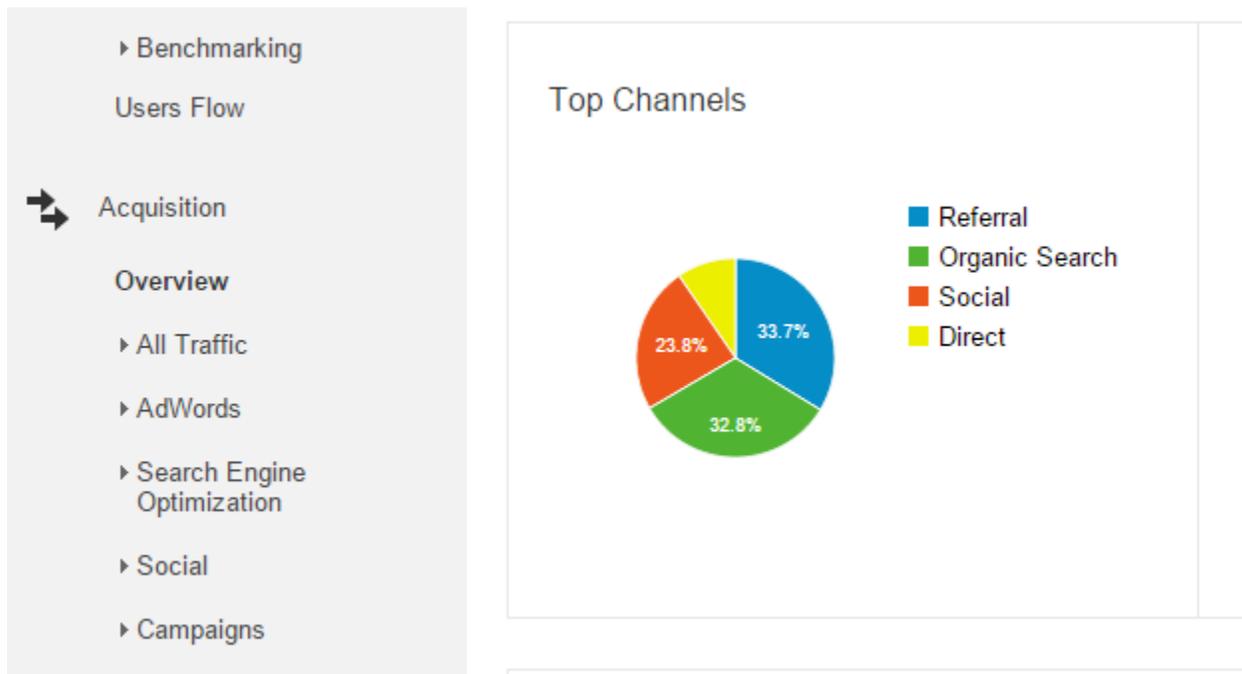
These are the visitors who have come through some promotional content, through some campaign or from links found all over the web. These are very much trackable.

- Search engine traffic (also called organic reach)

This is the classic query traffic that is sent by search engines as a result of searches being made which bring you up on the results page and the user clicks through to your URL.

- Social traffic

This part of traffic includes the visits originating on social networks, and it allows you to measure the benefits of your efforts on social media in terms of visits and conversions.



Being aware of figures and percentages allow you to identify your weaknesses and strengths, to understand your increases and decreases in traffic and its sources and to pick up patterns in your performance that may be illegible if you were not looking at the bigger picture with segmentation.

2. Referrals due to certain keywords or phrases in particular

It is extremely essential to be aware of which keywords are the magic words bringing in the most traffic, and also which are the ones not performing so well. You may be under-optimized for keywords that have a lot of traffic potential and are already great contributors to traffic. Remember, if your website was a song, keywords would be the catchy bits that everyone remembers, the memorable parts of the lyrics or melody. So it is highly important for you to have a clear picture of which keywords are doing what for your website. The analytics of any website are incomplete without a regular tracking of the performance of its keywords. And fortunately enough, there are a lot of tools available to aid you in keyword metrics.

Search Terms	Views
Search	Views
songs that have adjectives throughout	8
songs in the simple past	5
adjective songs for teaching	4
teaching using song lyrics	3
songs with adjectives	3
song simple past	3
past simple song	3
songs that my cool english teacher likes	2
using lyrics to teach english	2
Unknown Search Terms	1,028

[View All](#)

3. Referrals by specific search engines

It is crucial to measure how your website is doing in relation to specific search engines, not just how your site is doing with search engines generally. Let us look at a few reasons why you need to have a picture of your relationship with specific search engines:

- Comparing market share against performance

It allows you to analyze the traffic contribution of specific search engines in line with their market share. Different search engines will do better in different search categories or fields. For example, Google will do better in areas, which are more characteristic of a younger, more technology and internet-literate population, as opposed to fields like history or sports.

- Understanding the data in visibility graphs

In the event of a dive in search traffic, if you have the capacity to keep separate measurements of relative and exact contributions from specific search engines, you will be in a better position to troubleshoot the problem. For example, if the fall in traffic is consistent across the search engines, then the issue is probably one of access rather than one of penalties, in which case there would be a greater fall in Google's contribution than the others.

- Exploring strategic worth

Since different search engines respond differently to optimization efforts, it is easier to have a more effective and focused strategy in play if you can identify which of your optimization techniques or tactics are performing well for which engine. E.g. On-page optimization and keyword-centered methods deliver more significant results on Bing and Yahoo!, as compared to Google. So you will know what you can do to raise rankings and attract traffic from specific search engines and what you might be doing wrong.

Referrers	
Referrer	Views
Search Engines	83
Google Search	80
Ask.com	2
Bing	1

SEO tools to use

Apart from the tools we have mentioned earlier, there are several other tools that are worth mentioning, as they can be of great assistance with different SEO tasks, as well as with measuring the success of your strategy.

The most important tools are Google Webmaster tools (Bing has the same tool designed for webmasters interested in optimizing websites for Bing and Yahoo!) and Google Analytics.

The main benefits of these tools include:

- They offer free version of the tool, which allow anyone to use them. All you need is a Google account.
- They are quite easy to navigate and thus even if you are a beginner you will have no problems in using them.
- They offer the data to help you with website usability improvement.
- The possibility to link to other Google services (such as Google AdWords), to create comprehensive reports in order to analyze and improve the performance of the strategy.

Google Webmaster tools

This tool is a must-have tool for all webmasters, as it helps you track and analyze the overall performance of the website, crawl errors, structured data, internal links, etc. You can access

[Google Webmaster tools](#) for free using a Google account. You will have to add your website to Google Webmaster account in order to get the data about the website.

Google

Webmaster Tools

Site Dashboard

- Site Messages
- ▼ **Search Appearance** ⓘ
 - Structured Data
 - Data Highlighter
 - HTML Improvements
 - Sitelinks
- ▼ **Search Traffic**
 - Search Queries
 - Links to Your Site
 - Internal Links
 - Manual Actions
 - International Targeting
 - Mobile Usability
- ▶ Google Index
- ▶ Crawl
 - Security Issues
 - Other Resources

New and important

No new messages or recent critical issues. [View all](#)

Current Status

Crawl Errors >>

Site Errors

DNS	Server connectivity	Robots.txt fetch
✓	✓	✓

URL Errors

23 Not found

Sitemaps No Sitemaps >>

Search Queries

1,210 queries

In addition, the tool provides suggestions on how to improve your website in terms of HTML improvements, which is extremely helpful when it comes to optimizing your website.

Some of the common HTML improvements include:

- Missing meta description
- Duplicate meta description
- Too long or too short meta description
- Missing title tag
- Duplicate title tag

- Too long or too short title tag
- Non-indexable content

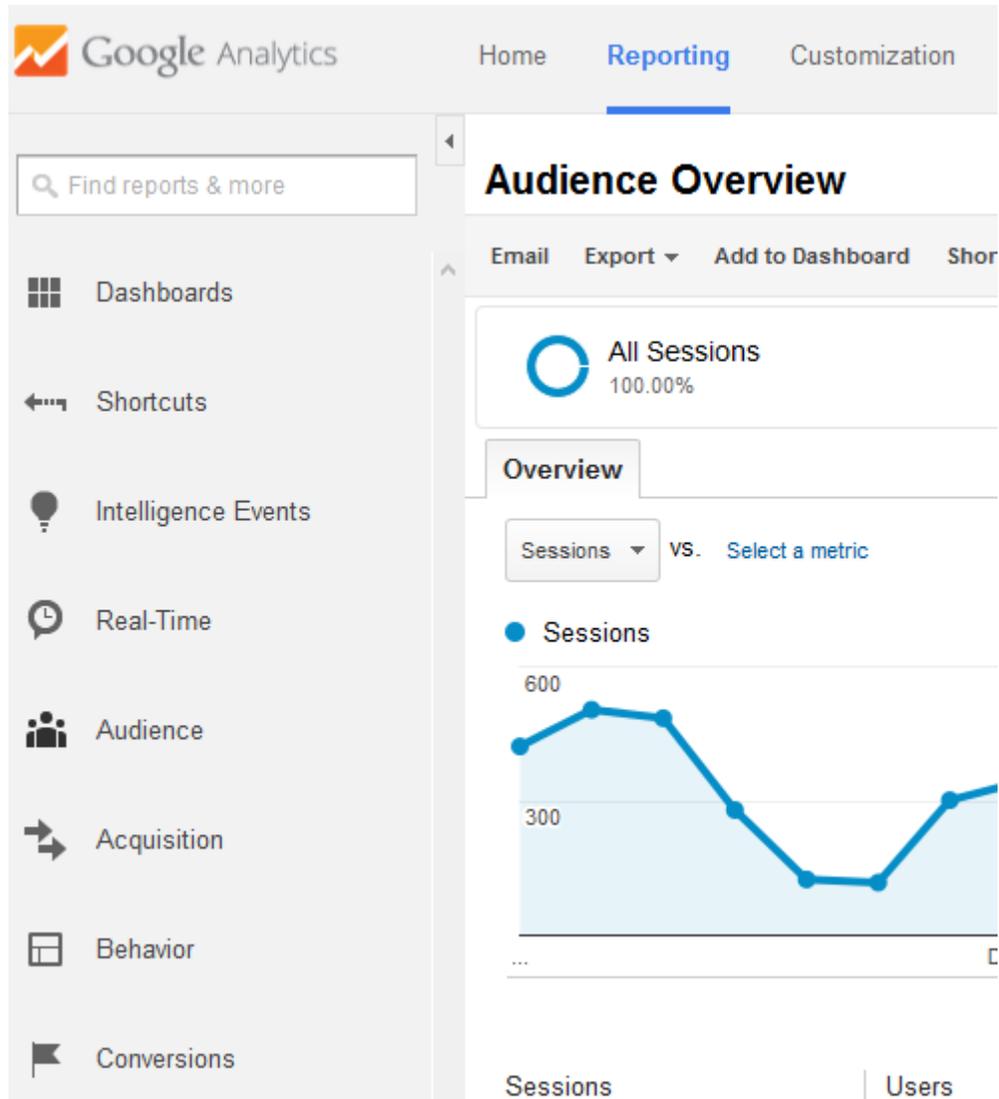


Webmaster Tools

<p>Site Dashboard</p> <p>Site Messages</p> <p>▼ Search Appearance ⓘ</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">Structured DataData HighlighterHTML ImprovementsSitelinks <p>▶ Search Traffic</p> <p>▶ Google Index</p> <p>▶ Crawl</p> <p>Security Issues</p> <p>Other Resources</p>	<h3>HTML Improvements</h3> <p>Last updated Jan 15, 2015 Addressing the following may help your site's user experience and performance.</p> <p>Meta description</p> <hr/> <p>Duplicate meta descriptions</p> <hr/> <p>Long meta descriptions</p> <hr/> <p>Short meta descriptions</p> <hr/> <p>Title tag</p> <hr/> <p>Missing title tags</p> <hr/> <p>Duplicate title tags</p> <hr/> <p>Long title tags</p> <hr/> <p>Short title tags</p> <hr/> <p>Non-informative title tags</p> <hr/> <p>Non-indexable content</p> <hr/> <p>We didn't detect any issues with non-indexable content on your site.</p>
--	--

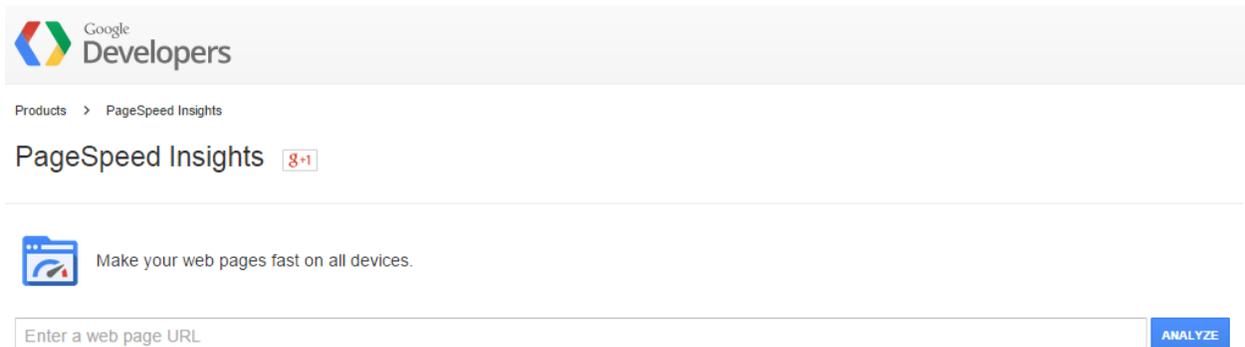
Google Analytics

This tool is used for tracking the performance of the website, behavior of the visitors, traffic sources, etc. [Google Analytics](#) offers a great amount of data about your website, which can help you learn about who visits your website (audience), how they arrive to your website (acquisition), how they spend time on your website and how they interact (behavior). You can also monitor the activity in real time and analyze the conversions by setting up goals or linking to Google AdWords.



PageSpeed Insights

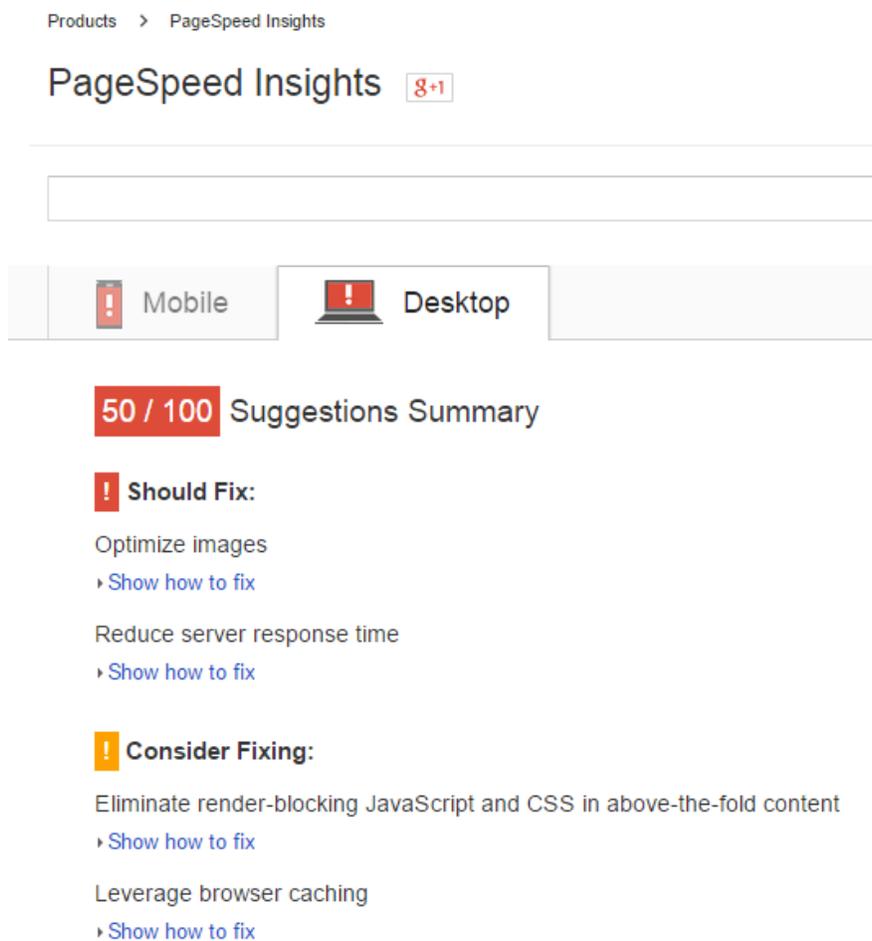
Since loading time of the website is an important factor that affect ranking, you should learn about your website's speed and try to improve it. Use [PageSpeed Insights](#) for this purpose.



When you analyze the URL, you will see suggestions related to optimization of different parts of your website, which affect site speed. Those are:

- Optimization of images
- Server response time
- Elimination of render-blocking JavaScript or CSS
- Browser caching
- Avoid redirects
- Enabling compressions
- Prioritizing visible content

This tool also provides suggestions on how to fix these elements.



The screenshot shows the Google PageSpeed Insights interface. At the top, there is a breadcrumb trail: "Products > PageSpeed Insights". Below this is the "PageSpeed Insights" title with a "g+1" icon. A search bar is present below the title. There are two tabs for device selection: "Mobile" (selected) and "Desktop". Below the tabs, a red box displays "50 / 100" next to the text "Suggestions Summary". Underneath, there are two sections of suggestions:

- Should Fix:**
 - Optimize images
[Show how to fix](#)
 - Reduce server response time
[Show how to fix](#)
- Consider Fixing:**
 - Eliminate render-blocking JavaScript and CSS in above-the-fold content
[Show how to fix](#)
 - Leverage browser caching
[Show how to fix](#)

10

**Steps to Optimize Your
Website**

10. Steps to Optimize Your Website

Now that you are fully familiar with search engine optimization and how search engines index and rank websites, you should learn how to optimize your website in order to maximize the chances of gaining high organic rank.

We will show you a list of tasks that you should focus on in order to achieve this. The tasks are presented in an order you should follow in the process of website optimization.

The optimization tasks we will see here are categorized into two groups. The first group of tasks is to be completed before you create a website, and it is recommended for those who are still in the phase of planning to develop a website. If you are in the phase of creating a website, you should go through both of these groups, as the second group of tasks will help you with website optimization and creation of search engine friendly website.

If you already have a website, than you should focus on the second group of tasks that will explain you how to optimize the existing website.

Before you create a website

Research

Research is a pretty much vast area, where you need to explore the possibilities and opportunities for creating a website and developing a strategy for you online business. Reading this book can be considered as a part of research, as your goal is to become acquainted with the process of optimizing your website in order to increase chances of achieving high rank in the search engines.

Besides learning about search engine optimization and best practices that will help you improve the visibility of your website, research phase also includes the following:

Keyword research

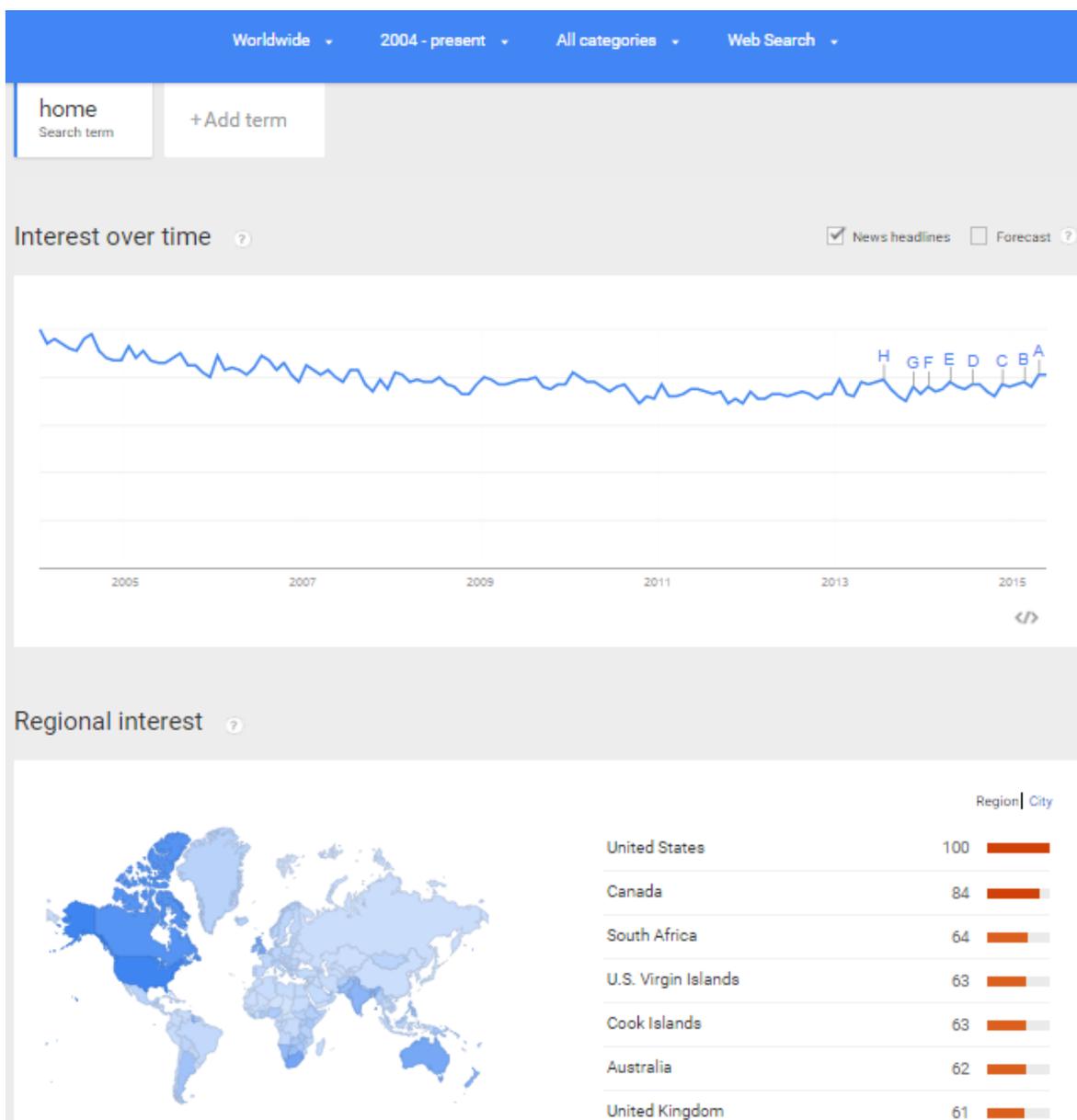
This is an inseparable aspect of online marketing in general, especially when it comes to SEO and paid advertising, where you need to use related keywords in order to enable search engines to identify your content and show it to the relevant searches.

We only mention this topic as an essential step of optimizing your website, as this topic has been analyzed in a separate chapter.

Demand research

Another aspect of research includes the analysis of the market. You need to explore the online market in order to determine what is lacking, and what people need, as this increases chances of your website being successful. If you are a local business, try conducting a local search by adding the location to your search query, and explore the results you see in the search engines.

Use [Google Trends](#) to explore the searches related to a certain keyword. For example, if we use the word “home” as the search term, we can analyze the number of searches over time, regional searches, as well as related searches that can provide additional ideas. You can also customize your search using the options at the top of the page.



Related searches ?

Topics	Top		Rising		
The Home Depot - Retail company	100	<div style="width: 100%;"></div>	home depot	100	<div style="width: 100%;"></div>
Home - Building use	55	<div style="width: 55%;"></div>	home page	20	<div style="width: 20%;"></div>
Funeral - Quotation Subject	20	<div style="width: 20%;"></div>	facebook home	15	<div style="width: 15%;"></div>
Funeral home - Literature Subject	20	<div style="width: 20%;"></div>	my home	15	<div style="width: 15%;"></div>
House - Building function	15	<div style="width: 15%;"></div>	lowes	15	<div style="width: 15%;"></div>
Lowe's - Retail company	15	<div style="width: 15%;"></div>	home office	10	<div style="width: 10%;"></div>
Mortgage loan - Industry	15	<div style="width: 15%;"></div>	home remedies	10	<div style="width: 10%;"></div>

Competitor research

This phase consists of two parts. You will first have to find out who your competitors are. Use the search engines to find the search results that appear when the keyword you find relevant to your content is used in the search query. This will help you discover the websites that are competing for the same keywords as you are. Make the list of these websites, as you will find it very useful later on when you want to monitor the competitors and compare their progress with your website.

Once you know your competitors, you should analyze their websites, as this can help you find out what they are doing well, and what they are doing wrong. A great tool to help you with this task is [Open Site Explorer](#), which allows you to analyze different aspects of the website and to compare several websites.

If you already have a website, and you want to compare it with your competitors, use the option “Compare Link Metrics” available inside this tool.

Page Specific Metrics:

	http:// (default)	www remove	www. remove	Add URL
Page Authority 📄	👍 27	26	20	
Page MozRank 📄	👍 4.39	4.38	4.33	
Page MozTrust 📄	5.13	👍 5.23	5.23	
Internal Equity-Passing Links 📄	👍 79	12	4	
External Equity-Passing Links 📄	👍 29	13	4	
Total Equity-Passing Links 📄	👍 108	25	8	
Total Internal Links 📄	👍 79	12	4	
Total External Links 📄	👍 31	13	5	
Total Links 📄	👍 110	25	9	
Followed Linking Root Domains 📄	7	👍 8	3	
Total Linking Root Domains 📄	👍 8	👍 8	4	
Linking C Blocks 📄	👍 2	1	1	
■ Equity-Passing Links 📄 vs ■ Non-Equity-Passing Links 📄				
■ Internal Links vs ■ External Links				

The analysis you see on this image has been conducted using the free options available inside this tool, but there are additional options available if you choose to use the paid version.

Choose domain name

You should choose your domain name very carefully. It should to be related to the business you want to present online, and it should contain the keywords you use. If you own a brand, the domain name should be your brand name.

Domain name should also be easy to remember, as this will be your online name, and people have to be able to easily remember it, so that they could find you. Short and easy-to-remember name is also good if you are going to feature the name on the flyers, business cards or posters.

Choose SEO friendly design

We have already discusses what SEO friendly design is, a design that allows search engines to easily crawl and index a website. It is generally recommended that you pay attention to this aspect, as the destiny of your website is largely based on the treatment you get from search

engines. Thus, you need to make things easier for search engine crawlers, in order for them to promote your website through organic search results.

Friendly design refers to the design of the website and the friendly URLs, as both contribute to well-optimized website that can be ranked high in the search engine results.

After you create a website

After you have created your website, following the guidelines above, you are ready for the next stage of the website optimization that involves a series of tasks to optimize the content of your website in order to maximize the efficiency of search engine optimization.

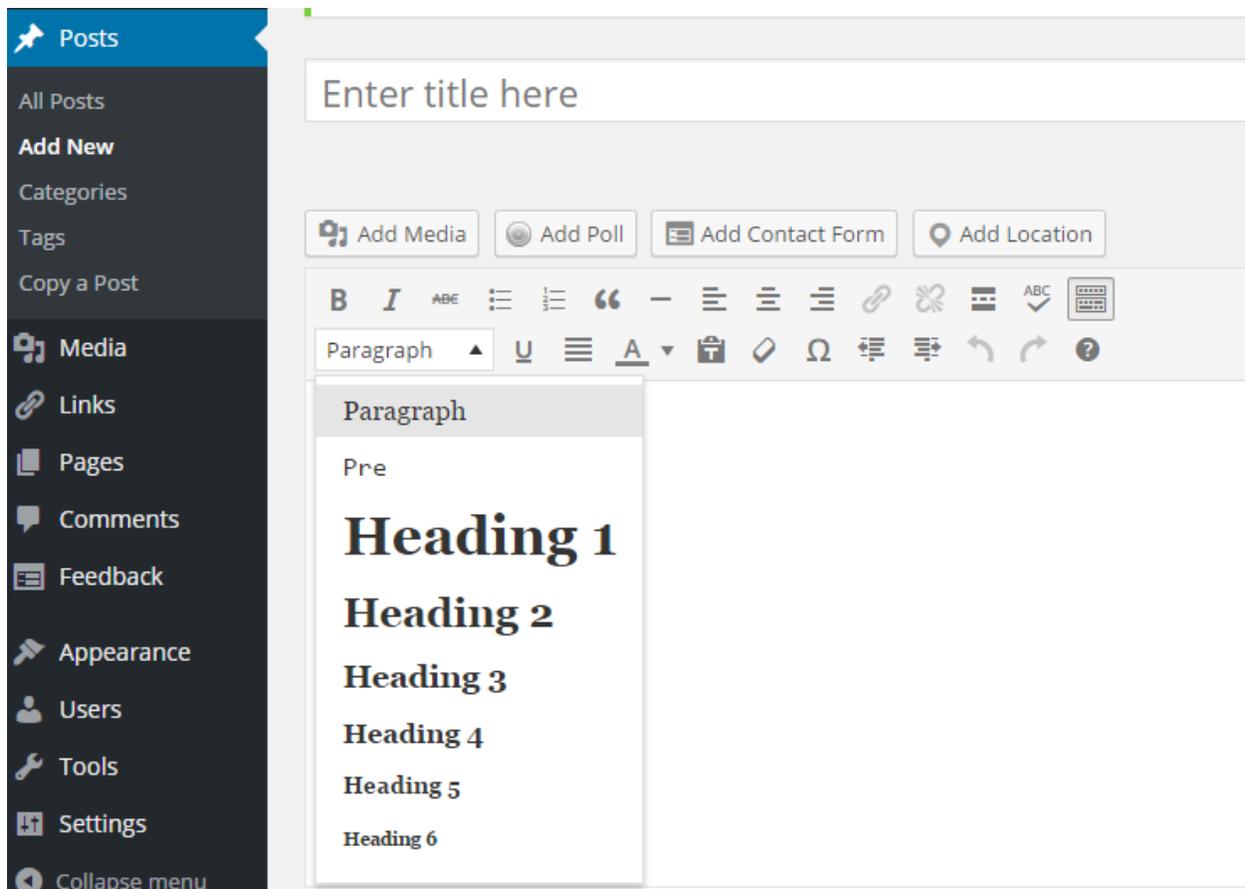
Add content

Over the past few years, content has become the central point of online marketing and online presence in general. Having content on your website, content that is of high quality and relevant to the topic of your website, has become a crucial factor affecting website positioning.

Unlike in the past, when it was not difficult to position a website without any content, evolution of search engine algorithms has come to value content as one of the metrics used when analyzing relevance and influence of a website. This is one of the reasons why a lot of websites nowadays have a blog.

For example, if you rent bikes, your website could contain several pages with instruction on how and where to rent a bike. You should also include the section about your company and the contact page. However, if you want to improve your SEO, you should consider adding content that is relevant to your topic, in this case bike rental. Nowadays, SEO professionals usually feature content through adding a blog to the website. In this case, articles you could post on your blog could be about types of bikes, tires for bikes, biking tours, benefits of bike rentals, etc. This way you prominently use keywords without being spammy.

The idea with this approach is that you will use content to increase positioning of your website by providing relevant and original information.



Regardless if we talk about content published on your website or blog, it is important to optimize the content in order to maximize its efficiency, which brings us to the next task.

Optimize content

Content optimization refers to the formatting of the text in order to allow search engines to understand it properly, so that search engines are able to match your content with relevant keywords. Here are some aspects of content you should optimize:

Titles

Titles should be catchy, interesting and engaging in order to attract the users to read the entire article. Apart from that, the title of the article must be related to the content of the article, as you should not post misleading titles that have nothing to do with the content. The usage of keywords in the title is also recommended. Further guidelines for creating titles have been explained under the Title tag section of this book.

Headings

Each article should contain a few headings where you would highlight the most important aspects of the article. Usage of headings is important for two reasons. First of all, an article with headings is reader-friendly, as it is well structured and it allows users to scan the text before they decide to read it. Secondly, search engines use heading tag, as well as other tags, such as title tag, to differentiate sections of the website's page. This way, search engines are able to figure out what is important on your website, as you would highlight the most important parts with headings. You should also try to include keywords in the headings, of course in a natural way that does not disrupt the reading process for the visitors.

Keywords

Usage of keyword in the content is necessary part, as those are the terms you want your website to be identified with. Therefore, besides using keyword(s) in the title and headings, you should also distribute the keywords in the text of the article. Besides the exact keywords, using synonyms is also helpful.

Make sure that you are using the keywords in a natural way. You want to avoid randomly repeating the keyword, as this will have negative effect on the readers, which will not read the entire article, they will not share it, and they will most like never come back to your website. This will have negative effect on website positioning.

Besides written content, there are other types of content you could use, such as videos, infographics or images. These are all helpful types of content as they are aimed at using the visual effects to attract the attention of the readers. Furthermore, presenting content in such form can sometimes be more effective than writing the content down and publishing it in the form of an article.

When it comes to optimizing videos, it is generally recommended that you provide transcript of the video in the article, below the video itself. Most users will only watch the video, without paying any attention to the transcript, but since search engines are not able to understand the content of the video, they will use the text from the transcript to index that page of your website.

You should also optimize images, for the same reason. Images are most commonly used tool to attract attention of the visitors. Besides presenting a photo or a graph, images can also feature text with an effective message. However, search engines are not able to see none of this, which is why you should use Alt text to add the description of the image.

Additional information on image optimization is available here:

<https://developers.google.com/web/fundamentals/performance/optimizing-content-efficiency/image-optimization?csw=1>

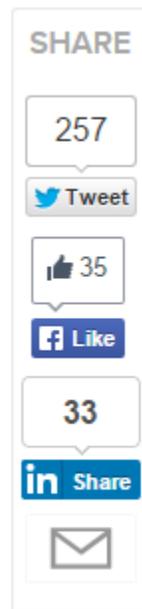
Add a sitemap

We have already mentioned the importance of having a sitemap, as it enables search engines to find any page on the website, regardless if it is linked to another page or not. Here are some cases where it is highly recommended that you have a sitemap on your website:

- You have a large website, with lots of pages
- You have lots of pages that are not linked to each other
- Your website has few external links because it is new

Integrate social media

Another aspect of optimizing your website should be the integration of social media. The first part of this integration is allowing users to easily share your content by installing necessary plug-ins. The plug-in is usually displayed above or next to the article, and it allows website visitors to share content on their social media accounts with only one click, without even leaving your website.



In addition, the plug-in usually features the number of times the article has been shared on social networks, which can also be encouraging for visitors to share it.

Besides integrating social media plug-ins, you should also be present on different social media. It is highly recommended that you create social media accounts on the most popular social networks, as this is a perfect way to stay connected with the social media users.

In fact, based on various studies, nowadays internet users are more inclined to look for brand and business information through social media, rather than using search engines. This way, they can stay up to date with the current news, promotions and sales, and these are all the reasons why the internet users will decide to follow you on social networks.

Having a base of social followers can then reflect well on your website's performance, as you get the chance to increase traffic and engagement on your website through social media.

11

SEO Recommendations

11. SEO Recommendations

We have compiled a list of the most important SEO recommendations in order to sum up the major points of this e-book and to gather the most important aspects you should have in mind when working on improving the positioning of your website.

Follow guidelines

If you want to play a game, you have to follow the rules. The same goes for search engine optimization. If you want to optimize your website for search engines, you need to follow the rules those search engines have in order to comply with the guidelines that enable search engines to work properly.

Over the past years, during which search engines have been introduced and have evolved, people always wanted to get quick results. In order to do so, many webmasters used suspicious techniques that were created to trick search engines into positioning a website high. These are usually called black hat SEO techniques. Search engines were serious about providing quality results, which is why they have come up with ways to detect techniques that are not allowed, and they even introduced punishments (also called penalizations) for those websites.

This is why you need to follow the guidelines and recommendations provided by search engines, so that you avoid any problems. Search engines advise you how to optimize your website through the guidelines, so these are the only actions that can truly help you improve the performance of your website.

The following image presents some of the [Google's guidelines](#) that can help you with improving visibility of your website and optimizing it in a way that search engines can easily crawl and index it.

Website owner

Increase your visibility by submitting and optimizing your website for Google search, and distributing your content across the web.



Web

[Add your URL](#) – Submit your website for inclusion in Google's index

[Rich Snippets](#) – Label your structured content to help users find pages relevant to their search

[Webmaster Tools](#) – Submit a Sitemap of your website to Google



Media

[Video Search](#) – Publish and syndicate online video content to make it searchable on Google

[YouTube](#) – Upload, distribute, and monetize your videos



Local

[Local Enhanced Content](#) – If you're an aggregator of local content, publish it through Google

[Rich Snippets for Local Search](#) – If you're a content aggregator, tell us about your business and point of interest information

Think about the search engines

Search engine optimization is a process that is aimed at understanding how search engines work in order to be able to adapt your website so that search engines can easily find it. Therefore, it is necessary to understand the process of indexing websites, how search engines see the websites, and how they index content of the websites.

Despite the fact that a page might look very nice on your website, and it is engaging for the users, if it is not optimized for the search engines, chances are search engines will not be able to see that page, which is why they will not show it in the search result. In this case, you might lose a lot of organic traffic, traffic that you would receive naturally when users type the term that is related to that page.

When creating content on the website, you should always think about search engines, and whether they will be able to understand the content structure of your website. This applies to each part of your website, including the home page, menus, articles, blog, etc.

Think about the visitors

Even though search engines optimization is in fact optimization of different website elements in order to affect the way search engines see your website, while working on SEO you have to consider the website visitors as well.

Have in mind that search engines will index your content if it follows the guidelines enabling them to understand it, but the website visitors will not always read your content even though they can see it.

Search engines are concerned with the technical aspect of the content, while readers need something to attract their attention. Visual aspects can be very helpful, such as highlighting certain parts of the text, usually the main ideas and catchy phrases, images and other graphics that can illustrate the points related to the text, etc.

Think about what the visitors will think about the article when they first see it. Will it be interesting enough for them to read it?

Apart from the visual representation of the content, you should also think about the topics of the article, as this also affects whether the visitors will read the content or not. The topic should be original, engaging and related to the content of your website. This way you provide quality, useful information and assistance to the visitors who are interested in that topic. Focusing on the topics related to your website allows you to target the visitors who are your potential customers, which maximizes the effect of your internet marketing strategy.

Stay up to date

Search engine optimization is a part of online marketing which is fast-changing area. Development of technology allows quick introduction of new practices, which can significantly affect the way you should approach online marketing.

The first aspect that affects such rapid changes is the number of websites, which is growing every day. Each day new websites are being launched, while some are being shut down, and this affects the situation on the online market, as each of them is competing for some keywords. This can change the situation for better or for worse for your website, but you need to be aware of those changes in order to be able to adapt and alter your strategy if necessary.

Secondly, new tools and applications are being introduced constantly, and this is something you should keep up with, as some of those tools or applications can be of great assistance in conducting SEO strategy. Regardless if those are optimization tools, analytics tools or new plug-

ins, if you are up to date with the newest inventions, you will be able to make the most out of those in order to improve your business.

Finally, companies behind search engines are aware of this fast-changing environment, which is why they are constantly working on improving search engine algorithms, enabling them to do even better job when indexing and ranking websites. Their goal is to provide the best user experience, so they need to be able to highlight only the best of the websites, while suppressing low-quality websites. Changes in the algorithms are frequently followed by adaptations in search engines recommendations, which is something you should have in mind, as the practices you are applying currently might be outdated, and thus not effective at all.

Optimization of the website is a constant process. Sometimes you will need more time and effort to conduct the strategy, while occasionally you will not have to do anything but monitor the performance. However, you should try to stay up to date with the world of SEO, as this is the way to find out about innovations that might help you with your work, or help you find out if there is something you are doing wrong, if there is something that might harm your website's positioning. You should follow blogs related to the topic of SEO, and you can even follow influential SEO professionals on social media.

SEO dos and don'ts

Here are some general recommendations on what to do, and what not do in order to make sure that your website is following Google's guidelines.

SEO dos

The following image illustrates some of the things you should do if you want to improve your SEO strategy.

- Be clearly better (be original and unique)
- Make pages for users
- Create useful pages (high-quality content is a must)
- Have clear hierarchy and text links
- Use title tags and alt tag to optimize content
- Give users a map



Be clearly better

Think about what makes your website unique, valuable, or engaging. Make your website stand out from others in your field.



Make pages for users

Make pages primarily for users, not for search engines.



Create useful pages

Create a useful, information-rich site, and write pages that clearly and accurately describe your content.



Clear hierarchy & text links

Make a site with a clear hierarchy and text links. Every page should be reachable from at least one static text link.



Titles and alt tags

Make sure that your <title> elements and ALT attributes are descriptive and accurate.



Give users a map

Offer a site map to your users with links that point to the important parts of your site.

SEO don'ts

Here are some of the things you should not do if you want to achieve better ranking in the search engine result pages.

- Avoid sneaky redirects or doorway pages
- Do not use hidden text
- Do not use scraped content (originality and uniqueness is very important part of optimization)
- Do not stuff your pages with keywords
- Do not add malware to the pages
- Do not abuse rich snippets
- Use the right amount of links (too many links can be overwhelming)
- Choose words wisely (keyword research is also an important part of optimization)
- Text links are more reliable, unlike image links

- Avoid having broken links and messy HTML
- Dynamic pages are more difficult for search engines to understand



Avoid sneaky redirects

Hiding redirects in javascript or other manipulative methods is bad. Users should always be sent where they expect to go.



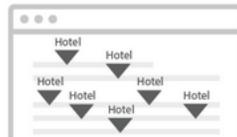
Don't use scraped content

Using scraped or stolen content is against the Google webmaster guidelines and it is also against the law. Not a good idea.

I am text. I am link. Can you see me?
 I am text. I am link. Can you see me?
 I am text. I am link. Can you see me?
 I am text. I am link. Can you see me?
 I am text. I am link. Can you see me?
 I am text. I am link. Can you see me?

Don't use hidden text or links

Using hidden text or links on your webpages is easily detected by Google. Your site will be penalized if you do this.



Don't keyword stuff your pages

Keyword stuffing is not only bad for your users, it is against the Google guidelines. Using keywords over and over unnaturally will not please your users.



Avoid doorway pages

Doorway pages are webpages that are "optimized" for particular keyword phrases and only exist to capture that keyword phrase in search engine results.



Don't add badware to pages

Don't be mean. Adding viruses, trojans, or other badware to your webpages is a sure fire way to lose trust, traffic, and ranking.



Don't abuse rich snippets

Misleading or false information in your rich snippet mark up will result in lower rankings.



Use the right amount of links

Too many links can overwhelm a user. Make sure every link has a truly good reason to be there.



Choose words wisely

Think about the words users would type to find your pages, and make sure that your site actually includes those words within it.



Text links are more reliable

Text is well understood by search engines, images are not. If you use images for important links on your page, they might not be understood or recognized as well as text is.



Broken links and correct HTML

No one enjoys clicking on a link that seems to be exactly what they are looking for only to find that no web page is there.



Dynamic pages

Dynamic pages must be able to be understood by Google. They face special challenges which are described in this guideline.

The following online tools can help you with discovering if your website is following guidelines, as well as which aspects of your website you need to fix in order to improve the positioning.

[Feed the bot](#)

Does your site follow the Google webmaster guidelines?

[Go](#)

not affiliated with Google Inc

[SEO Overview tool](#) [Mobile SEO tool](#) [Page Speed tool](#)

You should simply enter the URL you want to test, and the tool will generate an overview report of your website's performance.

- ✗ sitemap for search engines guideline
- ✗ site map / navigation page for visitors guideline
- ✗ titles / alt guideline
- ✗ page speed guideline
- ⚠ text / image links guideline
- ⚠ paid links guideline
- ✓ robots.txt guideline
- ✓ amount of links guideline
- ✓ if modified since guideline
- ✓ dynamic links guideline

Googlebot access - Does Google see your webpage correctly?

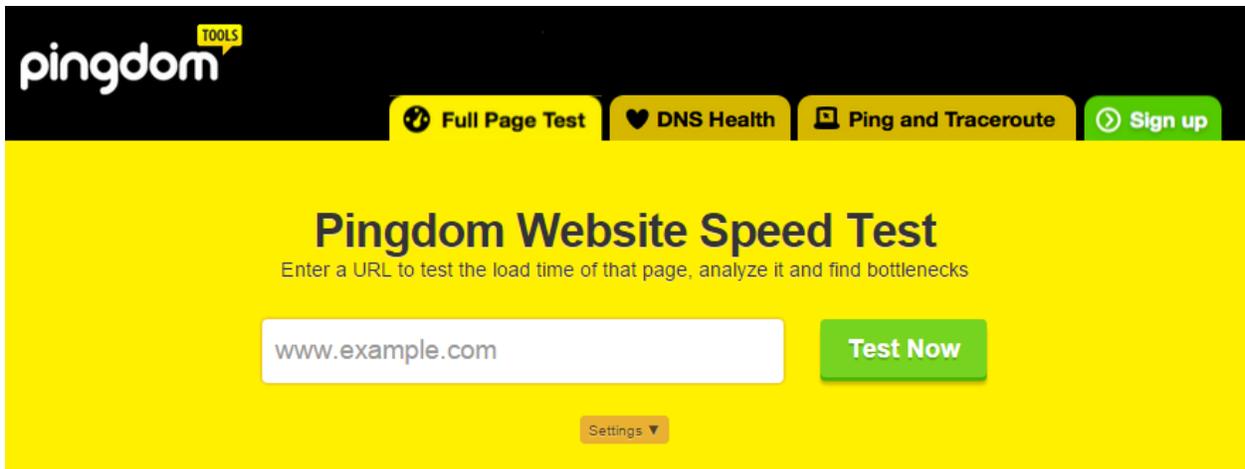
CSS	HTML	Javascript
✓ 9 CSS files not blocked		✓ 20 JS files not blocked
✓ 0 CSS files blocked		✓ 0 JS files blocked
	✓ Main html not blocked by robots.txt	

Resources blocked by robots.txt

✓ No blocked resources found

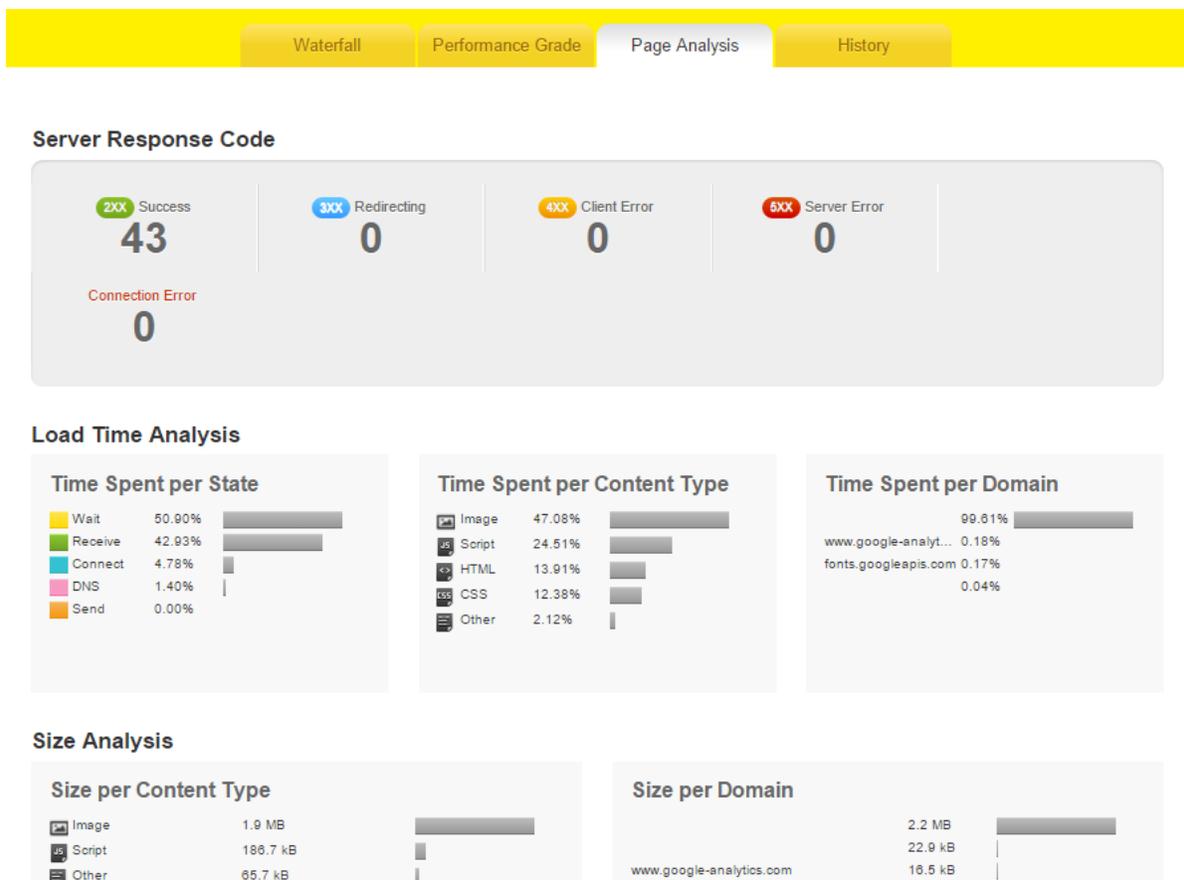
Detailed explanations

[Pingdom](#)



Use this tool to test the website speed by providing the URL of the page.

While this tool is mostly focused on website speed, one of the metrics, which affects website ranking, it also provides helpful details for page analysis.



12

Search Engine Optimization Glossary

12. Search Engine Optimization Glossary

1. Acquisition – In online marketing, acquisition can be defined as an action that a business intended to achieve. For example, if a business provides different subscription plans, the process of registration would be defined as acquisition by that company, as that is the action the company wants to achieve through its strategy.
2. Algorithm – An algorithm is a computer program used by search engines to look for clues or signals, which enable them to deliver relevant search results to the users.
3. Alt text – Alt text, short for alternative text, is a word or a phrase that is inserted as attribute element in HTML to describe an image. Since search engines cannot crawl images, so they use alt text to index this content and show it when relevant search is performed. Alt text is also displayed to the online users if, for some reason, the image cannot be loaded and shown on the web page.
4. Analytics – Analytics represent the collection of data related to website performance in terms of visits, page views, bounce rate, visit duration, etc. Analytics is used to understand the behavior of the visitors and the performance of your website, which allows improving those aspects.
5. Anchor text – Clickable, visible text in a hyperlink is called anchor text. The words inside the anchor text are said to be one of the factors influencing website ranking in the search engine results pages.
6. Backlink – A backlink is a link received from another website. Backlinks are also called inbound links or incoming links.
7. Bing Ads – Bing Ads is an online program enabling users to create advertising campaign on Bing search engine.
8. Branding – Branding is the process of creating a unique name and image for a product in order to establish its position on the market and among the customers. This process is mainly done through different types of advertising campaigns, both online and offline.
9. Broken link – A broken link is a link that does not work, meaning that the link leads to a nonexistent page, probably due to the fact that the page has been moved or deleted.

10. Browser – Browser or a web browser is a software application used to find and display content on the internet.
11. Cache – Cache is the component storing the data from the websites the user has visited.
12. Canonical tag – Canonical tag is used to deal with duplicate content. This tag tells search engines that a page should be treated as a copy of another URL, and that search engines should actually credit the original page when including the pages into the search results.
13. Competitiveness – Competitiveness or keyword competition is the measure of how difficult it would be to position a website for a particular keyword, based on the competitors, i.e. the websites that are using the same keyword to position their own website. Competitiveness of the keywords depends on the popularity of the keyword and the competitiveness of the sector.
14. Content – In terms of SEO, content refers to any type of information published on a website, which is created in the purpose of attracting search engine traffic. Various types of content can be used such as blog posts, articles, lists, guides, videos, images, product pages, etc. Content is said to have a great importance for website positioning nowadays, hence the saying “Content is the king”.
15. Conversion – A conversion is the specific action you want your web visitors/browsers to take, such as sale, sign up, downloading a file, etc.
16. Crawler – Crawler is a program used by search engines in order to visit the websites and fetch the information for the search engine index.
17. Cryptic text – Cryptic text is the text using a certain code.
18. CSS – This stands for Cascading Style Sheets and it presents the language used to describe the look and formatting of a document written in markup language. CSS affects the page in terms of layout, color and fonts.
19. CTR – CTR stands for click-through rate. This metric is used to measure the success of an online campaign, such as advertising campaign or email marketing campaign. You can calculate click-through rate by dividing the total number clicks by total number of impressions.

20. Domain authority – This term is used to describe a measure of domain name strength. Three major factors influence the value of domain authority and those are age, popularity and size. The values range between 0 and 100.
21. Flash – Flash is a technology used to create interactive multimedia applications, such as websites, banners, games, etc. When it comes to websites, they commonly used Flash technology to display a photo gallery or animated video. While visual effects are great to improve the visual aspect of a website, a major drawback of Flash technology is the fact that search engines are not able to index the content inside a Flash file. In addition, this technology can also prolong the load time of the website.
22. Follower – A follower is usually defined as someone who subscribes to be notified of your updates. In terms of social media, social followers are social media users who decide to start following your account, by clicking on like, follow or subscribe button.
23. GIF – GIF, short for Graphic Interchange Format, is a type of image file that is of lower quality than other types of formats, but it supports animations. The size of these files is not large which is why they are great for websites, but the color palette is much more limited than with other image types.
24. Google AdWords – Google AdWords is an advertising program provided by Google. The main purpose is allowing you to set up and run online advertising with sponsored results shown in the search engine results pages.
25. Homepage – A homepage is an introductory page of a website. It is the first page a user visits when the website domain is entered into the web browser. Homepage is also called index page or main page.
26. HTML – This stands for Hypertext Markup Language and it represents the standardized system for tagging text files, in order to alter the structure of the page (text, headings, tables, photos, etc.).
27. Hyperlink – Hyperlink is a link reference that allows the website user to access another document or a specific part of the document.
28. Inbound link – Inbound link, or backlink is a link posted on another website pointing to a page on your website.

29. Index – Search engine index represents the collection of information retrieved by search engine crawlers. The collection of data gathered inside the index is then used to provide answer to the search query.
30. Indexable – This term usually refers to websites, web pages or content of a website that can be indexed by search engines, due to the fact that it follows search engines guidelines. This way search engine algorithms can successfully crawl and index the content of a website, in order to show the content as organic search results.
31. Interact – In online marketing, the process of interacting refers to the process of engaging into a virtual conversation with your website visitors, social followers, etc. Rather than just having a website, modern market demands companies to be social and interact with the visitors, in order to maximize the benefits of online presence.
32. Internet marketing – Also called online marketing, this term refers to marketing that uses online media, such as a website, online advertising, social media, etc. in the purpose of promoting a business and generating leads.
33. Java – Java is a programming language used to create applications that can run on virtual machines and browsers.
34. Java applets – Java applets are small java applications that can be downloaded from the web server and run on computer by a web browser that is Java compatible.
35. JavaScript – JavaScript is scripting language used in the HTML file of a website.
36. JPG – JPG or JPEG stands for Joint Photographic Experts Group. It is the type of file used for graphics. It allows creating images of high quality, which can then be saved as smaller files, but the quality of the image is damaged after the image is resized, which is why this format is called lossy image format. This is also the reason why PNG image type is used instead.
37. Keyword – Keyword is a word or phrase that is used to describe the content of the web page. Keywords are used in SEO to optimize the web page and provide additional information to the search engine crawlers about that web page, but they are also used in paid advertising.

38. Keyword density – Keyword density is the percentage of usage of the keyword or keyword phrase on the web page.
39. Landing page – A landing page is a single page that appears after the user has clicked on the link in the search engine result, search engine ad, the link posted on social media, included in the email campaign, etc. This page is also called lead capture page or a lander.
40. Link – A link is a connection from one point to another. Most commonly, a link is inserted into a highlighted word or picture that can be clicked on in order to take the user to another object. There are different types of links.
41. Meta data – This term is used to describe the types of data about the application or content. Meta data provides information about the web page using the standardized language and tags that allow search engines to successfully interpret the data.
42. Meta tag – This is the coding system used in HTML to mark up the content of the website in order to allow search engines to understand the data. The meta tags provide the meta data about the HTML document.
43. Metrics – Metrics are measures that are used to track and monitor a specific element. When it comes to websites, you can track metrics such as the number of visits, average session duration, etc. Metrics are used to evaluate the website performance.
44. Mobile-friendly – Website content that is mobile-friendly is the content that is displayed correctly on mobile devices, such as mobile phone, tablets, etc.
45. Negative keyword – Negative keywords are used to control online advertising campaign, as they prevent an ad appearing for that particular word. This method is used for avoiding showing ads in relation to the irrelevant searches, which reduces the budget and improves the performance of the advertising campaign.
46. Off-page – This refers to the factors that affect ranking and which are not available on the actual website. Instead, these are external factors, such as links.
47. Online presence – Online presence refers to presenting and promoting a business using online media, such as a website, search engine ads, social media accounts, etc. The

purpose of having online presence is to try to reach online audience by developing an online strategy in order to improve your business.

48. On-page – This refers to the factors that affect ranking and which are available on the actual website. These are internal factors, such as tags, keywords, content, etc.
49. Optimization – Optimization is the process of improving different on-site and off-site elements according to SEO guidelines, in order to improve the positioning of the website in the search engine results pages. Various aspects of a website can be optimized, such as content optimization, title optimization, image optimization, video optimization, etc.
50. Organic reach – The total number of unique people who saw your website or post through unpaid distribution.
51. Page authority – This term is used to predict the chances of web pages showing up in the search engine result pages. The values of page authority range between 0 and 100.
52. Page rank – Page rank is a metric ranging between 0 and 10 allowing Google to determine the importance of a website. Google search algorithm uses this metric to determine the relevance of the results related to the search query.
53. Paid reach – The total number of unique people who saw your website or post through paid distribution.
54. Plug-in – The purpose of plug-in, an application or a program that is installed on a website or a browser, is to offer additional software that specialize in a particular process, and thus improve or enable another functionality.
55. PNG – PNG, short for Portable Network Graphics, is a type of image file that supports lossless data compressions. This means that the image quality is not affected if the image size changes. This is the most commonly used lossless image type format on the internet.
56. PPC – PPC is short for pay-per-click and it refers to a type of paid advertising used in online marketing, where advertisers pay each time a user clicks on the ads, that are shown in the search engine results pages as sponsored results, or on social networks.

57. Ranking – Search engine ranking refers to the position in which a website appears as a result of a search query. Since the website ranked at the top of search results get more visits, ranking is an important part of search engine optimization.
58. Redirect – Redirects are used for allowing a web page or a domain to be available under more than one address. This means that even if the users try to access a certain page, if the page is redirected, also called forwarded, a different page is going to be shown to the user.
59. Referral – This refers to the page that links to another page.
60. Responsive design – Responsive design is a web design that provides optimal user experience, with both viewing and interacting, on different devices, including desktop computers, as well as mobile devices.
61. Result page – The page presented by the search engines containing the results, which are related to the search query.
62. RSS – This is short for Rich Site Summary, sometimes even called Really Simple Syndication. The purpose of RSS is to use web feed formats to publish information that is frequently updated. Online users can subscribe via RSS, so that they can keep up with the updates.
63. Search engine protocol – Search engine protocol is an application that allows search engines to search and retrieve information from the internet in order to present the search engine results. Search engine protocol uses the language and the techniques that are recognized and understood by the search engines, such as a sitemap, tags, etc.
64. Search engine saturation – The number of pages from one website that are indexed by search engines is called search engine saturation.
65. Search engine update – Search engines algorithms are regularly updated in order to make sure that search engines provide best user experience. These updates sometimes affect the search engine best practices, which is why you should be aware of these updates and make sure you follow the current best practices.

66. Search query – Search query is a query entered into a search engines when searching for information. There are different types of search queries, depending on what kind of information users search for using search engines.
67. Search volume – The amount of searches that occur related to a specific search query represents search volume.
68. SEM – Search engine marketing is a type of internet marketing where the website is promoted through search engines, using both unpaid (SEO) and paid (PPC) methods.
69. SEO – Search engine optimization is a type of internet marketing where the ranking of the website is improved using unpaid methods.
70. SERP – SERP stands for search engine results page, and it is the page that is shown to the users after they type a search query into the search engine. The search engine results page shows the results that are related to the query, including both sponsored or paid results, as well as organic results.
71. Sitemap – A sitemap is a list of pages of a website, allowing search engine crawlers and users to access any page of the website from the sitemap. This list enables search engine crawlers to easily discover pages, which is why a sitemap is one of the important parts of search engine optimization.
72. SMM – Social media marketing is a type of online marketing that uses social media websites to promote a business, increase traffic and generate leads.
73. Spam – Spam is irrelevant or unsolicited content, that can be posted on websites, shared via email or social media.
74. Sponsored results – Sponsored results are search engine ads which are the results shown in the search results as highlighted. Businesses have to use an online advertising program, such as Google AdWords, to create sponsored results.
75. Traffic – In the online world, traffic refers to the flow of data. When it comes to websites, traffic represents the amount of data sent and received by the visitors of that website, regardless if the paid or unpaid method was used.
76. TXT – It is a file format used for text with little formatting options.

77. URL – This stands for Uniform Resource Locator and it refers to the location of the file on the internet. It is the address of the website, which you type into the browser in order to find a particular website.
78. User experience – This term refers to the experience a person gets while using a website or a computer program. User experience represents whether the person is satisfied using the product, which influences reputation the product has.
79. Visibility – This term refers to the chance of search engines showing your website in the search engine results pages. SEO tasks are conducted in order to increase website visibility in search engine results and thus improve the performance of the website.
80. W3C code standard – W3C stand for the World Wide Web Consortium and it represents the community working together to develop and improve web standards. W3C code standards are applied to enable developers to build online platforms that are available on any device, using different technologies, such as HTML5, CSS, XML, etc.
81. Web directory – Web directory or link directory is a directory that links to other website pages, which are sorted inside different categories.
82. XHTML – Extensible Markup Language is a variant of HTML that uses the XML syntax, which is different from HTML.
83. XML – XML (short for Extensible Markup Language) is a markup language. It is used as a format for RSS and it is compatible with many different programs and devices.

13

Sample Questions

13. Sample Questions

Questions

1. Search Engine Optimization can be defined as:

- a) A series of tasks conducted in the purpose of improving the website's position in the SERP
- b) A series of tasks conducted in the purpose of promoting the website through paid ads
- c) A comprehensive link building strategy
- d) A strategy of promoting the website through social media

2. How are images optimized on a website?

- a) By using full resolution images
- b) By sharing the images on the website's home page
- c) By adding Alt text to the images
- d) By adding keywords to the website's home page

3. What is keyword research?

- a) Competitors' analysis
- b) Optimization of the text
- c) The process of determining which social media websites to use for promotion
- d) The process of determining which keywords to use to optimize the website

4. Which of these activities is a part of content marketing?

- a) Creating and managing a blog
- b) Creating and managing an online store
- c) Sending newsletters
- d) Analyzing the performance of keywords

5. Which of these activities is not a part of SEO?

- a) Keyword research

- b) Optimization of content
- c) Optimization of search engine ads
- d) Link building

6. SERP stands for:

- a) Search engine report performance
- b) Search engine result performance
- c) Search engine result page
- d) Search engine report page

7. SEO is an important part of modern business because it allows you _____.

- a) To have an online store
- b) To start up a company
- c) To collaborate on different project
- d) To promote your business online and reach more people

8. Visibility of a website is _____.

- a) Quantity of website pages that have been indexed by search engines
- b) The occurrence when your website is easily found and displayed at the top of the search results
- c) Online promotion through search engine ads
- d) The number of external links

9. SEO, or organic reach, is part of _____.

- a) SMM
- b) SEM
- c) SERP
- d) PPC

10. SEO is also called organic reach because:

- a) It is based on the search results only
- b) It is based on improving visibility of the website through organic reach
- c) It uses organic reach to improve the efficiency of the ads
- d) It uses only one method of optimization

11. Which of these tools is recommended for keyword research?

- a) Google Analytics
- b) Google Webmaster Tools
- c) Google Keyword Planner
- d) Google Trends

12. When working on SEO you should:

- a) Follow search engine guidelines
- b) Use the best tools regardless of the guidelines
- c) Focus on your website only
- d) Focus on the competitors' analysis only

13. Which of these is considered to be black hat SEO strategy?

- a) Keyword research
- b) Keyword stuffing
- c) Optimization of images
- d) Optimization of videos

14. Which of these is off-page SEO strategy?

- a) Content creation
- b) Optimization of HTML elements
- c) Link building
- d) Optimization of images

15. SEO is a _____ strategy.

- a) Long-term
- b) Short-term
- c) Universal
- d) Impossible

16. What kind of links provide the most value to your website reputation?

- a) Manual links
- b) Social links
- c) No-follow links
- d) Editorial links

17. Links to a website are perceived as _____ by search engines.

- a) A vote of trust
- b) Useless
- c) Redundant
- d) Part of SMM

18. Website analytics is important for _____.

- a) Preparing the website for publishing
- b) Using social media accounts and blogs
- c) Monitoring and analyzing website performance
- d) Increasing visibility through ads

19. What do search engines use to understand websites on the World Wide Web?

- a) Crawlers
- b) Links
- c) Tools

d) Ads

20. One of the major benefits of SEO, besides increasing visibility is to _____.

- a) Publish free ads
- b) Generate targeted traffic
- c) Use social media
- d) Analyze the social analytics

21. Which one is not an SEO technique?

- a) Using analytics to analyze users' behavior on your website
- b) Using canonical meta tag and 301 redirects
- c) Using other websites to link to your website
- d) Promoting the website with ads

22. When using content creation as an SEO technique, you have to create content that is _____.

- a) Long and complex
- b) Relevant, original and valuable
- c) Promotional and descriptive
- d) Elusive and concise

23. SEO is an endeavor requiring _____ because search engines are in the process of updating and altering algorithms.

- a) Constant analysis
- b) A lot of assets
- c) Link building
- d) Preparation

24. Search engine crawlers or spiders index the content by reading the _____ and by correlating them with the content on the website.

- a) Links
- b) Sitemaps
- c) Meta tags
- d) Articles

25. Search engines have to understand the website's content in order to be able to _____ it.

- a) Publish
- b) Understand
- c) Index
- d) Place

26. When a user searches about history data, this is called _____.

- a) Action search
- b) Navigation search
- c) Information search
- d) Commercial search

27. When a user searches about best deals for purchasing a car, this is called _____.

- a) Action search
- b) Navigation search
- c) Information search
- d) Commercial search

28. Site popularity is defined as:

- a) A measure of presence that a website has in search engines
- b) Number of visits divided by page rank

- c) The number of links divided by page rank
- d) Page authority

29. Search engine spiders are able to understand and index _____ content.

- a) HTML
- b) CSS
- c) SERP
- d) PPC

30. SEO and SEM are forms of _____ available to everyone.

- a) Statistics
- b) Advertising
- c) Business
- d) Agencies

31. If you publish audio and / or video content on your website, you should provide _____ in order to allow search engines to find and index that content.

- a) Sound
- b) Images
- c) Transcript
- d) Title

32. Title tag should be between 50 and 65 characters long and:

- a) It should contain keyword
- b) It should contain keyword as close to the beginning of the tag as possible
- c) It should not be descriptive
- d) It should contain the word "tag"

33. Which of these elements is the most important for the search engines?

- a) Title tag
- b) Meta keywords
- c) Alt text
- d) No-follow tag

34. Using the pattern *primary keyword* → *secondary keyword* → *brand name* is said to generate high click-through rate. This strategy is called _____.

- a) Optimization
- b) Marketing
- c) Leveraging branding
- d) Content analysis

35. Meta tag, which is used to influence the activity of the search engine crawlers on a specific page, is called _____.

- a) Meta description
- b) Alt tag
- c) Keyword tag
- d) Spider tag

36. Description meta tag is a short description of the page enabling search engines to understand the content. Also, this tag _____.

- a) Is used in the search engines ads
- b) Appears as a snippet below the title tag in the search engines result pages
- c) Is used to instruct search engines to follow or not to follow a certain page
- d) Shows all the keywords grouped in one sentence

37. If there are no direct crawlable links pointing to one of the website's pages, this page _____.

- a) Is used as a landing page

- b) Must be independent and unrelated to the website's content
- c) Cannot be crawled by search engines
- d) Cannot be loaded

38. One of the things that can have negative influence on the link structure is having _____.

- a) Too many pages
- b) High page rank
- c) Too many search forms
- d) Too many external links

39. Follow links give so-called _____ to a website.

- a) Link structure
- b) Link juice
- c) Link map
- d) Link strategy

40. In order to ensure that all the pages of the website are crawlable, and that you have a good link structure, you should:

- a) Use sitemap
- b) Delete all the pages without the links
- c) Optimize content
- d) Increase the number of external links

41. No-follow links instruct search engines _____.

- a) To ignore the title tag of the page
- b) To ignore the anchor text
- c) Not to read the page that is linked to
- d) Not to publish the page that is linked to

42. When choosing keywords, it is best to use _____.

- a) As many keywords as possible
- b) Specific keywords and phrases
- c) Generic keywords
- d) Only the competitive keywords

43. A friendly URL is:

- a) Short and descriptive
- b) Full of number and unusual characters
- c) Short, and it must contain the date
- d) Long and unreadable

44. Which of these is not a phase of keyword research?

- a) Using keywords in the title tag
- b) Analyzing competitiveness of the keywords
- c) Estimating the traffic volume for the keywords
- d) Removing the generic keywords and keywords which are too competitive

45. No-follow links are important, since they build awareness for your website and _____.

- a) They are used as a vote of trust
- b) They are marked as irrelevant
- c) Website visitors can click on them
- d) Website visitors cannot click on them

46. Which one of these optimization tasks should be done before you create a website?

- a) Keyword research
- b) Add a sitemap

- c) Optimize written content
- d) Add content

47. Which one of these optimization tasks should be done after you create a website?

- a) Competitor research
- b) Choose friendly SEO design
- c) Integrate social media
- d) Keyword research

48. Adding a sitemap is especially recommended if you _____.

- a) Have a website with three to five pages
- b) Have a large website with lots of pages
- c) Do not use any analytics software
- d) Do not have social media accounts

49. What are SEO dos?

- a) Clear hierarchy and text links
- b) Use hidden text
- c) Add misleading and false information to the rich snippet
- d) Have broken links

50. What are SEO don'ts?

- a) Create useful pages
- b) Give users a map
- c) Descriptive and accurate titles and alt tags
- d) Keywords stuffing

Answers

1. a	18. c	35. d
2. c	19. a	36. b
3. d	20. b	37. c
4. a	21. d	38. c
5. c	22. b	39. b
6. c	23. a	40. a
7. d	24. b	41. c
8. b	25. c	42. b
9. b	26. c	43. a
10. b	27. c	44. a
11. c	28. a	45. c
12. a	29. a	46. a
13. b	30. b	47. c
14. c	31. c	48. b
15. a	32. b	49. a
16. d	33. a	50. d
17. a	34. c	

14

Conclusion

14. Conclusion

The importance of search engine optimization is primarily the fact that it improves the visibility of your website. In modern business, visibility is everything if you want to go ahead. People have to be able to find you and this is not an easy task, having in mind the number of competitors, i.e. those who want to be positioned for the same keywords.

When you understand the importance of visibility, you will be able to understand how this reflects to your business. Starting from the number of visits to your website, which is the first to improve once you increase visibility, you will see how other aspects of business are affected, such as sales, reputations, etc.

If the opportunities SEO offers are missed out on you will be missing on significantly in terms of the three factors— publicity, exposure and revenue.

What you need to have in mind is that search engine optimization is a long-term work, which might need months to show any signs of improvement. There are no instant solutions and tools that can help you get immediate success, regardless if anyone says otherwise. Despite the time necessary to invest in working on SEO, the results are more reliable and long-lasting.

The tools we recommended in this book are some of the most frequently used tools that can aid with different tasks, which are part of SEO, starting from keyword research, to website analysis. There are plenty of other tools, both free and paid, and the new ones being developed at this moment, so feel free to explore and find the tools that you find easy to use and that can really assist in the tasks you are about to perform as a part of SEO.

Lastly, since the internet has become such an expansive and competitive virtual arena, getting the most out of the possibility a search engine provides is a systematic, tactical and precise endeavor.

And that is why it is something that needs to be learnt and perfected –which brings us to the conclusion that search engine optimization is not only a recommendation for the modern business, but it has become a necessity if you want to run a successful online business. Over 3 billion people use internet, and this number grows each year, as you can see on the chart below, which makes it a significant portion of people worldwide, and if you want to reach them, one of the best ways to do so is to optimize your website in order to maximize the chances of people finding you.

Internet Users

3,048,080,853

Internet users in the world

[view all of them, one by one](#)

[Internet Users by Year](#)

[Internet Users by Region](#)

[Internet Users by Country](#)

[Definitions](#)

[Sources and References](#)

Around 40% of the world population has an internet connection today ([view all on a page](#)). In 1995, it was less than 1%.

The number of internet users has increased tenfold from 1999 to 2013.

The **first billion** was reached in 2005. The **second billion** in 2010. The **third billion** in 2014.

The chart and table below show the number of global internet users per year since 1993:

