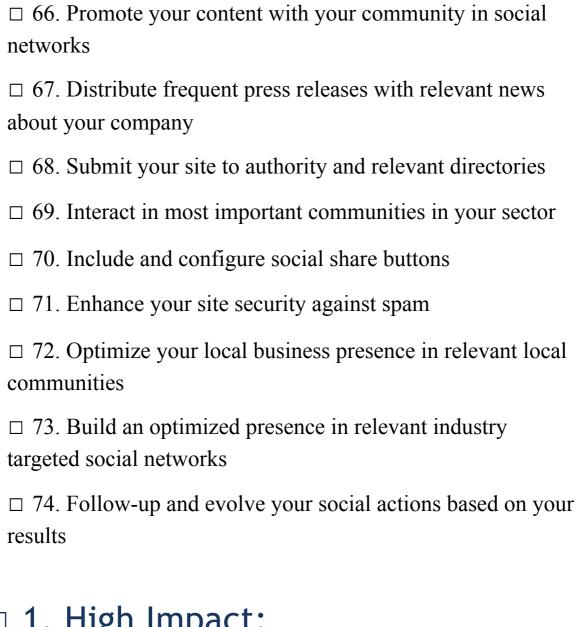
Website SEO Checklist (Complete Version)

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□ 1. High Impact:

□ 2. Optimize your landing pages towards conversion

Why it's important

Landing Pages are the first pages your visitors will see when they visit your site, often in response to a specific search query or via your marketing and promotion.

They need to be highly effective to ensure visitors convert by making a purchase, registering for more details, or promote your page to their own network.

Getting it done

Check your main Landing Pages in your analytics package to ensure you're aware where visitors are arriving, and look at Bounce Rates, Time on Page and where they go next.

Ensure each Landing Page is optimized with relevant and consistent keyword use, plus clear and compelling Call To Actions for your desired outcomes for these visitors.

Make sure Goals and Actions are as simple and easy to follow and complete as possible. For instance, request the minimum details for a follow-up, rather than a form with too many fields which will lead to a high drop-out unless it promises huge value in return.

Consider adapting your website design on key landing pages to remove clutter and unnecessary options. This can give more space for information and Calls To Action, limiting distraction and confusion.

External resources

- Identifying High Bounce Rates
- 5 Key Elements To Test On You Landing Pages
- Mobile Landing Page Optimization

☐ 3. Track and follow-up with the goals, KPIs and ROI of your site

Why it's important

Don't waste resources by worrying about every available measurement for your website.

By setting clear KPIs, and tracking goals and conversions, you can focus on what makes the biggest impact to your business. It's far easier to scale a website which is already performing well for a smaller audience than trying to change an established property. Ensure that everyone involved understands the metrics, priorities and how they will impact on your Return on Investment (ROI).

Getting it done

Ensure your analytics package is correctly configured and set tracking for specific goals (e.g. completing a purchase or submitting an email address), and the conversions for each goal.

This allows you to follow the progress of your website users as they journey towards each goal by using a Funnel to see progress step-by-step and identify stages which cause potential customers to drop out of the process.

You can then prioritise your design, content and marketing on increasing conversion rates, reducing areas which cause friction and lowering investment in channels which aren't performing.

Save time reporting by using custom dashboards to collect your most important metrics on one screen.

External resources

- Best Web Metrics / KPIs for a small, medium or large business
- 15-Point Conversion Checklist
- How To Guide for Conversion Rate Optimisation

□ 4. Form and test hypotheses to drive improvements on your site conversions

Why it's important

Every website ever published will have improvements that could be made to raise conversion rates. What separates successful sites is that improvements are constantly evaluated and tested to allow changes to be tracked and measured.

To develop a conversion optimization plan, you need to form a set of hypotheses based on your analytics and insight for methods of improvement that will allow you to correctly implement these ideas.

Getting it done

When you have identified problem areas and pages in your Conversion Funnel, you can dive deeper into analysis with on-page tracking, if there is enough visitor volume for valid measurement.

Challenge yourself to come up with more than one potential solution for each problem. Assess each idea against potential implications for conversion rates, cost of implementation, and how they affect the rest of your site. Even very small changes, such as a word or background colour on a button can make a big difference.

For changes which will deliver a Return on Investment, identify how you can test and evaluate them, for instance via A/B Testing, Usability Tests or other measures. It may be worth driving additional paid traffic to view those changes in the short term.

Prioritise data and results over personal preference. It's easy to dismiss or overlook results if you feel the changes will make your site look ugly, for example. An honest evaluation would compare the value of increasing conversions against any potential loss in brand value and trust from a design change.

External resources

• Planning and checking your Conversion Rate Optimization

- Ways to boost Product Page Conversions (With Examples)
- How to Improve Website Conversions with Copywriting

5. Create relevant and attractive content that connect with your audience

Why it's important

Given information of equal value, most people will automatically prefer and share whichever is better visually.

If you're investing time in creating great content and resources, it is worth spending extra time on the design and polish to ensure they are appealing. That gives you the best chance of attracting awareness, social shares and links.

Getting it done

Due to the sheer amount of text, images, infographics and videos on the web, your content has to be compelling for it to be worth sharing.

Think about how you can make information and resources easier to view, use and share by using graphics, videos and other tools.

Make sure your assets can be shared by providing social media buttons, and can also be embedded by either using external platforms or creating your own embed code.

All content should be branded or watermarked to ensure your brand is seen wherever it is used.

Each asset can attract traffic and links individually via Image Searches, or by sharing on relevant sites such as Visual.ly, Flickr, Instagram, Youtube, Vine, Slideshare, etc.

External resources

- Free Infographic Tools
- Tips for Promoting Infographics
- Quick Guide to Creating and Sharing Videos Online

6. Develop search rankings competitor research

Why it's important

Not only do you need to know how your competitors may have achieved successful search rankings, but it's also great to see if what they are currently investing time and resource in pursuing. By analysing the performance and activity of your key competitors, you can get an understanding of what they are working on right now.

That doesn't mean you have to compete with every competitor for every term – just those that are also beneficial and relevant to your business.

Getting it done

Check your keyword target list and examine how the top handful of regularly appearing sites in organic results may have targeted those terms. And whether they also advertise or use social media.

Use free or paid tools to get more detailed information on who is bidding on keywords within your industry, and where competitor sites are obtaining relevant links.

Look for new keywords being targeted, or significant effort and changes for existing keywords to identify the current focus of your competitors.

Check competitor online and offline advertising for opportunities, such as a competitor advertising a term or phrase you could rank for or advertise against.

External resources

• Competitor Keyword Analysis: <u>SEMRush</u>, <u>Spyfu</u>, <u>SimilarWeb</u>, <u>Niche Watch</u>, <u>Compete</u>

□ 7. Optimize Your Local Business with Google My Business

Why it's important

Your listing on Google+ not only helps to promote your work via the social network, but it's extremely important for location listings for Google Maps, which are hugely prominent in locally focused searches, particularly on mobile devices.

Plus you'll also benefit from Google Publisher Markup, and other services such as Google Hangouts. It's also useful to go through the same claim and verification process for Bing.

Getting it done

Register your business via Google My Business, and ensure your address is verified and activated.

Optimize your listing with great photography, and all relevant information regarding your business, including contact details and opening times.

Encourage reviews of your services are submitted via Google, in addition to on your site or via other

review services.

Claim the best custom URL when it is available for your Google+ identity.

Ensure your Google+ profile is linked from your website to enable Publisher and Authorship links, and to encourage reviews and likes from your audience.

External resources

- The End of Google Places
- Google+ Local for Small Business
- Local SEO Strategy 2014: For Small and Medium Sized Businesses

□ 8. Develop a link building plan for your Website

Why it's important

Great content is of little value if it's impossible to find. Therefore it's important to generate traffic to your website articles, and this can also generate links which pass search engine ranking value.

Your research should highlight popular and relevant websites for your customers as locations from which to try and get relevant and quality visitors. You should also include references to your website which do not currently include relevant links, and coverage or links obtained by your competitors. If a website mentions or covers your competitor, there's a high chance they'll mention you.

Getting it done

Look for relevant and quality websites within your industry. If they already link to you, can this be repeated or improved for relevance? If they link to competitors, is this something that can be leveraged for your own website?

Target content types which appeal to industry websites. Do they tend to feature research, infographics, advice, etc.?

Use journalism tools such as Help A Reporter Out to respond to enquiries for experts within your industry. Responses often include your bio and a site or social media profile link.

You should have a mix of backlinks to your site that supply traffic and popularity for your search engine rankings. Avoid focusing solely on one or the other.

External resources

- Monitoring for mentions on the Web: Google Alerts
- Help A Reporter Out (HARO)

• Infographics and data visualisations

9. Develop competitor and audience content research

Why it's important

Although keyword research will give overall levels of competition for particular opportunities, you can gain much more insight by performing specific content research. In particular, look at successful competitors to see how they have optimised their own content and efforts.

Combine this with audience research; including speaking to your own existing customers and asking your potential audience for feedback, particularly if there are examples where they can't find a good solution in search results.

Getting it done

Analyse competitor activity, looking at what content is being produced on their website, on social media and externally for specific pages and terms.

Regularly research your existing customers for additional opportunities that they aren't finding on your site.

Find potential customers online at trade publications, specialist forums, or offline at industry events, and find out how they are currently searching and finding solutions. Test surveys before sending them out.

Include regular checks for both rising trends within your industry, and for potential news-related opportunities that may occur to benefit from areas competitors may not have noticed yet.

External resources

- Competitor analysis tools include <u>SEMRush</u>, <u>Screaming Frog SEO Spider</u> or Firefox browser add-on <u>KGen</u>
- Check for competitor social media profiles with Namechk or Knowem
- Free online survey tools include SurveyMonkeyor Polldaddy
- Google Trends and Google News

□ 10. Verify which sites are mentioning and linking to your site

Why it's important

In addition to picking up on mentions on other sites which could be turned into links, it's also increasingly important to monitor where all your website links are coming from.

Not only does this mean you can pick up on inaccurate, irrelevant or broken links, but it's possible that your site rankings could be harmed by links from low quality spam sites. By monitoring your links and link profile, you can spot a sudden increase in low quality links and respond appropriately.

Getting it done

Set up tracking for links to your site (Backlinks). Check for the quality of the websites, the anchor text used, and where the links are pointing to. Try and maintain a good balance of optimized and generic terms, and Followed/NoFollowed links.

Watch for increases in links from low quality sites. This may be due to plagiarism, particularly if you provide RSS feeds of your content.

Maintain domain diversity. You need links from a range of different websites, across different quality levels. You don't want hundreds of links all pointing to your website from one low quality domain.

If you notice an large increase in low quality links, you can respond by contacting the website owner to request removal, or potentially consider using Google's tool to Disavow those links and avoid having them counted by the search engine as a last resort.

External resources

- Dedicated link monitoring tools: <u>Open Site Explorer</u>, <u>Majestic SEO</u>, <u>Ahrefs</u>
- Google Disavowal Tool Information

□ 11. Optimize images for your website

Why it's important

An accurate text description of an image is valuable to search engines, and visually-impaired or blind website visitors. It's also valuable to websites in potentially generating traffic from image searches as well as avoiding losing potential customers.

This text is contained in the Alternative Text or 'Alt' attribute, which is seen by search engines, various social image sharing sites (e.g Pinterest), and is converted to speech by software for the visually impaired. This makes an accurate description of the content of the image highly important.

Getting it done

Ensure your descriptions are accurate for the content of the image.

Avoid Alt Text longer than seven words. The absolute maximum would be 150 characters including

spaces.

Use the most relevant descriptive keyword, and avoid repetitive keyword stuffing.

Consider how users performing an image search may look for different attributes than a web search.

File names and captions should also be logical. Images should also be optimised for load times, but larger and higher quality pictures will perform better in image search results.

External resources

- Google Guide to Images
- Google Image Publishing Guidelines
- <u>Image Alt Attribute Relevant for SEO</u>

□ 12. Optimize your pages titles

Why it's important

Page titles are important for search engine relevance and they will also be the first thing users see in search results, so it's important they are logical for the search query and users feel confident clicking on them.

They should be optimised as an accurate reflection for what is on that particular page to avoid being flagged by Google, or users simply feeling tricked when they arrive on your website.

Getting it done

A unique title should be created for each page. Avoid duplication, particularly due to automation on larger websites. Try to avoid boilerplate titles as far as possible.

Titles should be 70 characters or less (including spaces) and should include your keywords as early as possible. The brand should only be placed first on the homepage of your website.

Avoid spammy keywords such as Free, Cheap etc.

Use combinations of terms such as city names and industry terms to add relevance.

Keep the keywords consistent with those in your content, sub-headings (H tags) and meta descriptions.

External resources

- Title Tag Optimization
- Google Tips for Site Titles

□ 13. Create and configure your "robots.txt" file

Why it's important

Any site will have pages which are needed by users or website administrators, but are not necessarily required or desirable to appear in search results. These can include login pages, duplicate content etc.

A robots.txt file can be used to stop search engines from crawling these groups of pages and adding them to their search engine index. It's easy to create and edit by uploading a simple text file to your server, but some care needs to be taken to avoid any errors. It's also important to note that malware and spam robots are likely to ignore any instructions in the robots.txt file, and as a publicly available file anyone can view your restrictions.

Getting it done

The robots.txt file should be published to the top-level directory of your server, usually wherever the main index.html page is located.

It can be uploaded and tested in both Google Search Console (previously Webmaster Tools) and Bing Webmaster Tools to check it works as expected. In Google Search Console it can be found under Crawl > Blocked URLs.

Note the time and date of any changes, and monitor crawl rates and indexation in your webmaster tools dashboard to ensure only the desired pages are affected.

External resources

Robots.txt.org

□ 14. Use keywords for internal site links

Why it's important

Internal links are an important SEO factor as well as enhancing the usability and conversion rates for your website. Doing this correctly guides users and search engines to your most valuable pages, and also ensures that they are seen as relevant for the correct terms.

You also have far more control over your internal linking to ensure that your website doesn't become over-optimized and become seen as a spam site by search engines.

Getting it done

Include natural and relevant links within content but don't attempt to link to every page on your site within one article. And keep below 100 links total per page (Internal and external)

Use relevant keywords consistent with the focus of the destination page for the linked anchor text. Don't attempt to fit every possible keyword into one link text.

There shouldn't be a need to optimize internal links to your homepage as you should already have a link on each page via your logo or home button.

Useful links can be placed in the footer of your website, but avoid the temptation to include sitewide spam links.

Use NoFollow sparingly to avoid passing value to pages which do not need it, for example your Privacy Policy or Terms and Conditions.

External resources

- Check your internal link structure with <u>Google Search Console (previously Webmaster Tools)</u> in Search Traffic > Internal Links
- Mathematics of Internal Linking

15. Optimize your site internal navigation and links

Why it's important

Effective navigation and links are vital for happy website users and search engines. It should be clear and simple for visitors to understand, and should be kept to as few levels as possible to avoid burying important content and pages deep within your site.

It's important to check links have not become broken or outdated over time, leading visitors and search engines to error pages, including important links within articles and other content.

Getting it done

Try to keep the hierarchy of website sections as flat as possible, and conform to common naming conventions.

This needs to be balanced with keeping the total links on a page below 100 in total.

Schedule regular checks to ensure links are still functioning. Content that has moved can be fixed by putting 301 Redirects in place to send visitors and search engines to the new, correct location.

Ensure important internal links are positioned early in content to ensure they are crawled and weighted appropriately.

External resources

- Broken links will be among the errors listed in <u>Google</u> and <u>Bing</u> Search Console under Crawl>Crawl Errors
- Free online link tools include <u>2bone Online Link Checker</u>, <u>Creating Online Broken Link Checker</u>, <u>Submit Express Broken Link Checker</u> and <u>iWeb Tool Broken Link Checker</u>

□ 16. Show the same content to users and search engines

Why it's important

Non-accurate search engine listings will not only harm your site usability but might also lead to search penalties. Cloaking, or the practice to show different content to users than to search engines, is a common trick used by spammers and hackers that among others, is well-known by search engine companies and should be avoided at all costs.

Although manipulating and tricking search engines, known as 'Black Hat' SEO, can lead to short term gains, these are generally also short-lived, and the repercussions last much longer.

Getting it done

Invest time and resource into creating or improving relevant content for search traffic.

Avoid 'easy' short-term tricks which are likely to lead to penalties in the long term.

To maintain results gained through 'Black Hat' techniques, the cost is usually the same or greater than the investment needed to do it ethically to begin with.

Search engine compliance also brings usability and accessibility benefits.

External resources

• Google's Quality Guidelines

□ 17. Optimize your existing mentions

Why it's important

If a site is already mentioning you, your competitors, or you industry, then it is a good sign they would be willing to link to your site if prompted with good reasons.

The easiest route is to suggest that an existing mention would be more useful to their visitors as a relevant link, at which point you can ensure that the link is the most relevant and optimised version for your needs.

Getting it done

Monitor news sites, blogs and social media for mentions of your brand, your competitors, or relevant questions that could earn you customers or links. (e.g. 'Where can I buy product x?')

Prioritise relevant industry sites, and respond promptly to social network enquiries. Ensure you are contacting the right person, and that your contact is polite and helpful to them. Point out how your request will be helpful to them, and their readers, rather than the benefit to you.

Make sure you're balancing optimised keyword links with general brand links to avoid an over-optimization problem.

External resources

• Free Media Monitoring Tools: <u>Topsy</u>, <u>Google Alerts</u>, <u>Twitter Search</u>, <u>Social Mention</u>

□ 18. Develop a mobile friendly site version for your site

Why it's important

Without a website that is optimized for mobile visitors, you are turning huge numbers of customers away. Most Internet users have access to smartphones or tablet devices, and this can be their sole internet-enabled device in some cases.

Not only can you ensure your website displays correctly on mobile devices, but you can also optimize the design and layout to be more appropriate for touchscreen viewing and input.

Getting it done

Consider the advantages of each solution for creating a mobile-optimized site. In many cases, responsive design offers the quickest and easiest solution.

Mobile devices have a variety of screen sizes and operating systems. Check which are most popular with your current and potential audience, and prioritise optimization specifically for those screen resolutions and ratios.

Check the different website behaviours of mobile users and highlight their most popular actions, such as researching phone numbers, addresses and opening times for example.

Bandwith and connectivity are more important for modern mobile users than desktop consumers – check how to optimize your mobile site for speed.

External resources

- 25 Reasons Why You Should Have a Mobile Friendly Website
- 6 Tips and 15 Free Tools to Make an Awesome Mobile Website
- 9 Tips to Optimize Mobile Site Speed

□ 19. Develop an overall SEO process plan

Why it's important

Your website ambitions and keyword research will give you a large number of potential opportunities, so it is important to have a clear and defined way to evaluate which will make a difference to your business.

From that point you'll also need a defined process for enacting the changes needed to achieve your goals to be able to follow it through to successful outcomes – especially when explaining the work required to clients or business stakeholders.

Getting it done

Evaluate keywords and phrases by volume, competition and whether they are likely to be in a purchase funnel for conversions. For instance, longer, more detailed product searches involving attributes such as size, colour, design etc.

Monitor and balance your brand keywords, the shorter and more competitive words, and the longer, more specific phrases to maintain a natural link profile and combine volume with results that are quicker to achieve.

Combine this with analysis of the work required, and map out the logical stages required. These should be separated into areas such as technical code changes or content improvements and the processes should be designed to be replicated easily for each keyword or topics.

External resources

- Focus your SEO Process
- SEO Project Management

□ 20. Develop a keyword research

Why it's important

The most important element of a successful search engine optimisation strategy is picking the right keywords to target. Not only will it inform your wider marketing activity, but also trying to rank for the wrong keywords will cost time and money.

Accurate research will let you identify the correct opportunities to aim for, and give you plenty of insight into how to achieve them.

Getting it done

Choose the most accurate keywords related to your product, brand or service with a reasonable search volume with a lack of competitors. Look for longer phrases (long-tail) opportunities.

Common terms and phrases are more achievable than attempting to force users into adopting new words just to find your website.

Start by brainstorming as many potential words and phrases searchers may use, and look at what is actually resulting in visits to your website via your analytics platform.

Add additional suggestions via free online tools, including looking at the common results supplied via Google Autocomplete.

Watch for growing trends and opportunities via Google Trends.

External resources

- 16 Free Keyword Research Tools
- 6 Steps to Keyword research

□ 21. Medium Impact

□ 22. Optimize your site local signals

Why it's important

Even if you don't have a physical location for your business, many customers still want to deal with local vendors for products and services. Not only is this important for search via desktop, but the massive increase in mobile search and the search weighting for Google My Business results, makes them essential.

Getting it done

Optimize your business for Google My Business (including Google+) and Bing Places.

Create local-focused content, optimized for relevant keywords plus location in your titles, descriptions and other content.

Use the local-focused content when generating links from other local websites, organizations and business listings.

Utilize location-based directories and services, such as Yelp and online Yellow Pages. Also location-based apps such as Foursquare.

Ensure you are targeting any paid promotion, such as social media advertising, by location too.

Use Geo Microformats.

External resources

- Geo-targeting for Google Search Console (previously Webmaster Tools) and Geo Microformats
- How to Boost your Local SEO
- 10 Free Local Business Listing Sites

□ 23. Measure SEO Progress with the right KPIs and metrics

Why it's important

Know if you're making a difference by ensuring the correct tracking and measurements are in place before you start optimizing your website. It's difficult or impossible to achieve retrospectively, and reporting is vital to justifying your efforts.

Getting it done

Regularly check errors and recommendations in Google and Bing Webmaster Tools.

Crawl > Sitemaps: Shows the number of URLs submitted and indexed by search engines is accurate.

Search Traffic > Search Queries: Displays keywords delivering traffic to your website.

Search Traffic > Internal Links: Make sure you're linking within your own website (limit links within a single page to 100 or less).

Search Appearance > HTML Improvements: Suggestions for technical code changes.

Check your Analytics for Traffic Sources > Search > Organic to see who arrived on your site purely through search queries. Exclude your brand terms and account for Google's 'Not Provided' setting.

External resources

- Google Search Console (previously Webmaster Tools)
- Bing Webmaster Tools
- Google Analytics
- Quantcast
- Clicky
- ClickTale

□ 24. Optimize your site content

Why it's important

Attempting to rank for all desired keywords with one page of your website is not only impossible, but won't be always relevant and easy to use for your site visitors.

Instead, you should develop each unique page and piece of content to target one particular keyword, topic or phrase and use is consistently across all the visible and metadata associated with that URL. Combining that with unique, quality content will give you the highest scores for relevance, and the best chance of achieving prominent search engine rankings.

Getting it done

Ensure your keyword or keyphrase appears in your page titles and headlines, ideally towards the front of each.

Use your keyword throughout your content. Frequency is useful, but avoid forcing your keyword into every sentence, and use related words, phrases and topics to add authority and readability to your content. Maintain a high ratio of text to HTML.

Break up text with sub-headings, ensure they are tagged with tags and use your keyword or phrase.

Your keyword or phrase should also appear in image ALT text and captions where possible, and in the meta description for the page, which is what will appear in search results under your page title.

Check your content isn't duplicated elsewhere on your site, or is being copied by other websites.

External resources

- How to Handle Legitimate Duplicate Content
- Avoid Keyword Stuffing
- Plagiarism Checker Tool: Copyscape

□ 25. Verify that your site pages are showing the right HTTP status

Why it's important

A HTTP status code is a response from your server when a page is requested, whether that comes from a user or a search engine crawler. Status codes indicate whether the website page is served successfully, whether there are any redirects in place to other pages, or whether there are issues such as pages which are unable to be found or which are unavailable due to server errors.

A high number of issues and errors is obviously bad for website users, and will also lead to problems with search engines crawling and indexing your website effectively. There are a wide range of codes which can be potentially seen, and the most common ones are listed below.

Getting it done

2xx equals a successful process, such as 200, which indicates the server has correctly provided the requested page.

3xx is for redirections, such as 301, which indicates a permanent redirection to a new location, or 302 for a temporary move to a different location.

4xx indicates an error in the request, most commonly a 404 Not Found response, which visitors usually experience as a 404 error page.

5xx indicates a server error, such as 503 if the server is unavailable.

Response codes are listed in Google Search Console (formerly Webmaster Tools). under Crawl > Crawl Errors or via external tools such as Screaming Frog SEO Spider, which will crawl every page on your site.

External resources

- Google Search Console (formerly Webmaster Tools) or Bing Webmaster Tools
- Screaming Frog SEO Spider

26. Develop a content plan for your Website

Why it's important

Visitors and search engines both respond to fresh, unique, high quality content. To consistently provide that level requires a content or editorial plan to enable text, assets and marketing to all be produced in a timely and organized way.

It also gives more time and structure to allow planning for important seasonal or industry events, or respond to specific months when purchases might be more frequent. You'll also have a structure against which to measure the success of specific content types or articles.

Getting it done

Defining brand tone or guidelines is important to ensure consistency for all content and communication, including using the right logos, images and assets.

A content calendar or schedule allows you to balance types of content – e.g. Promotions, Information, Industry News and Insights, to reach customers at different stages of the buying cycle and clearly map it to the desire keyword target.

Include content produced for your website, and all relevant marketing such as emails and social media.

Monitor and test different frequencies, publication days and time of day to discover what works best for your audience.

External resources

- 5 Steps to Creating a Killer Content Strategy
- Content Marketing For Growing Your Business

27. Ensure Your Site Works across popular Browsers, Resolutions and Devices

Why it's important

Although desktop browser standards and compatibility have become more manageable, many websites are not optimized for the huge numbers of mobile and tablet users.

This means that potential customers could be lost purely by not enabling and optimizing websites for effective mobile display and desktop websites are often impossible to use on smaller mobile touchscreens.

Getting it done

Measure your current mobile audience in Google Analytics under Audience > Mobile Overview and Devices, and Internet browsers under Technology > Browser &OS. You can also check Operating Systems, Screen Resolutions and more.

Ensure your website is checked across Screen Resolutions and Mobile Devices whenever design changes are made to ensure both compatibility and usability. Virtual emulators allow you to check

devices you do not own.

Use Segmentation to reference Device and Screen Resolution with conversions to prioritise further optimization. Do certain settings indicate higher conversion rates or bigger purchases?

External resources

- Browser Size Tool
- Cross Browser Testing

□ 28. Use canonical annotations

Why it's important

Canonicalization is the specification of the original page version for your content. This is done by choosing one canonical (preferred) URL for each page and refer to it from the other pages that you might have featuring the same content.

For example, if you have identical products with different colours on separate pages, you could pick the most popular example as the canonical version. The alternate colours will still exist for users, but external links to them will be largely passed onto the canonical URL.

Getting it done

Canonicalization is seen as a hint rather than a directive, so shouldn't be used in place of 301 or 302 redirects. It should only be used where content is identical or very similar.

Canonicalization is specified via a link added to the head section of the non-canonical pages, and should only be used for one level of canonicalization.

Overuse or incorrect use can be seen as attempt to 'sculpt' the SEO value of your website and pages and should be avoided.

External resources

- Google canonicalization advice
- Google information about rel="canonical"

29. Establish a hierarchically organized site architecture

Why it's important

Humans and search engines both love clear structure, particularly when looking to purchase goods or services.

Large supermarkets are generally great examples of clear structure enabling easier purchasing. Search engines also use the hierarchy or your site architecture to establish clear signals about your business and website focus and priorities.

Getting it done

Clear and consistent categories are best. Try to use common accepted language used by customers and search engines.

Using mutually exclusive categories will help to avoid duplicate content and other issues.

Sub-Categories should also be immediately accessible to establish your taxonomy and help users quickly refine their options.

Look at how users search and refine their options to help improve categorisation. Do you need categories for brands in addition to product type?

Ensure all Category and Sub-Category pages are optimized as Landing Pages for the appropriate keywords, including Titles, Meta Descriptions, and on-page content.

Your site hierarchies will influence which links may be displayed in your search engine results, and will be reflected in your page urls.

External resources

Getting Site Architecture Right

□ 30. Measure the advancement of your Usability and CRO efforts

Why it's important

You have to be able to assess the impact of any changes you make to your website. Do long term results match with what you saw in short term testing?

You may find visitor preferences and user behaviour changes, including the rapid increase in mobile Internet users. That means you need to ensure every change is notated, monitored and reported in your analytics package and reporting.

Getting it done

Make sure you have accurate Goal Tracking set in your Analytics package. Use functionalities such as Events Tracking if a conversion doesn't result in a separate page loading.

Ensure you have valid benchmark figures before starting your test to allow optimal comparisons.

Regularly re-assess your efforts to ensure they are in line with your business goals, and will deliver a good Return on Investment. You shouldn't invest in expensive changes without business benefits.

Track improvements against the impact on other areas of your site. Often changes may have unforeseen effects which will be apparent in analytics. Generally you should work from the final pages of each goal back to the earliest.

External resources

- Best Web Metrics/KPIs for a small, medium or large business
- How To Guide for Conversion Rate Optimisation
- Planning and checking your Conversion Rate Optimization

□ 31. Optimize Your MetaDescriptions

Why it's important

Meta Descriptions are a summary of your page content and give you space for an elevator pitch to encourage visitors to your site from search results.

They need to combine relevance with encouragement, and avoid appearing spammy. Consider how you can answer the questions of people searching for that particularly keyword or phrase.

Getting it done

Meta Descriptions should be 160 characters (including spaces) to appear in full across all search engines, and should including your keyword for that page.

Use combinations of terms, potentially including your brand name, and avoid using the main keyword more than twice.

Avoid duplication, which will be flagged up in Google and Bing Webmaster tools. It's better to have no description than duplication. If nothing is provided, search engines will either use arbitrary text from the page or potentially a DMOZ listing.

Try to answer relevant questions and provide reasons for users to click through.

External resources

- Google Search Console (previously Webmaster Tools), Bing Webmaster Tools
- Technical Aspects of a Meta Description
- About Meta Descriptions

□ 32. Develop a competitive and audience link research

Why it's important

Links from other relevant and quality websites is a major part of improving your search engine rankings, and can also produce direct traffic to your website.

By looking at which sites are linking to competitors, and which sites your target audience is visiting, you can combine both benefits when you earn links to your website. These Backlinks have a large influence as they are recommendations for your site for those particular terms.

Getting it done

Aim for trusted and popular websites that cover the same or relevant topics as your site.

Balance a reasonable amount of relevant keywords in the linked anchor text with more generic terms such as brand names and phrases like 'click here' and 'read more' to avoid being flagged for overoptimising your link building. Ideally aim for a 50-50 balance.

Mix Follow links (that pass link popularity) with NoFollow links (that pass no SEO benefit). It's unnatural to only have links to your website which pass link equity for highly relevant terms.

Monitor your Backlink profile, and avoid spam sites. These are likely to rank poorly, be covered in advertising, and have hundreds of links per page.

Be aware that search engine guidelines state any linking in exchange for payment, free products or other incentives should be NoFollowed.

External resources

- <u>Link Building Strategies</u>
- Backlink Analysis Tools
- 33 Link Building Questions Answered

☐ 33. Optimize your site speed performance

Why it's important

The time it takes for your pages to load is not only a factor in how well your pages rank in search results. Internet users are also increasingly impatient and a delay of milliseconds can cause them to

leave your website in frustration.

There are a range of issues which can affect the speed of your site, so it's important to look at each factor logically in turn from your server speed to your code and content.

Getting it done

Check your server speed and optimisation for scaling with increased traffic using WooRank and other tools.

Caching tools can lessen the server load, and improve speed. These can be deployed at server, database and website levels.

Optimize your content, particularly large image and video files. Reduce inessential widgets, graphics and code.

Code improvements such as reducing CSS files and Javascript can make a big difference.

Ensure you're monitoring your page load times and maintaining best practices.

External resources

- Google PageSpeed Tools and ResourcesSpeed Tests: GTmetrix, Pingdom, Google Page Speed
- 20 Quick Tips to Optimize Page Load Time

34. Optimize international sites to target different countries and languages

Why it's important

The Internet is a global marketplace so it makes good sense to offer your products or services with a multilingual or multi-country website without accidentally creating duplicate content issues. If you are targeting a single country with a website you can either rank higher by using the correct domain extension for that nationality, or indicate your targeted country via Google Search Console (previously Webmaster Tools) for a generic domain extension such as .com.

Getting it done

Multi-lingual or Multi-countries websites should use rel="alternate" hreflang="x to indicate the correct language and country with a HTML link element in your pages headers, HTTP headers or in Sitemaps. Each page must identify all language versions, including itself.

Check that the language and country codes are correct, for instance, it should be hreflang="en-gb", not hreflang="en-uk"

Build your URLs using the language code e.g. http://www.example.com/en/ or http:// en.example.com

Provide a specific XML sitemap for each language and specify the location of your sitemap in your robots.txt file

Research and optimize for the correct keywords for each language.

External resources

- Google Multi-regional and multilingual site advice
- <u>List of Language Codes</u>
- Hreflang Tag Generator Tool

☐ 35. Submit your business to locally targeted data aggregators

Why it's important

Local service listings will help you optimise for Local SEO, as they are usually relevant to specific locally targeted sectors and they'll also help you to attract nearby customers to support your website or business.

By working with local providers you'll also build your business network.

Getting it done

Look at directories based on your location. Assess them for quality, including rankings for relevant terms, and editorially-driven listings. Make sure your listing is optimized and maintained to ensure you don't have out-of-date addresses and phone numbers displayed.

Check your area for local blogs covering the region in general, or relevant niches such as food, entertainment, shopping etc. You might also find the creators of larger national blogs are located in your area. In both cases, build relationships with those bloggers.

See if you can obtain recommendations from local organisations, such as local government and tourism websites, educational organisations such as universities, or by helping local charities.

External resources

Free Local Directory Recommendations by Country

☐ 36. Show the right mobile version to the relevant device

Why it's important

Although responsive design and HTML5 have made mobile websites and optimization easier, it's important to research and understand the different behaviours of users by device. This allows you to tailor your design to smartphone or tablet use, and optimize for each customer segment.

And more than half of users say they won't recommend a business with a poorly designed mobile website

Getting it done

Consider how interaction with a smartphone is likely to have different requirements to your desktop version. Speed and usability are prime concerns.

Desktop versions can work reasonably well on large tablets, but not for smaller tablets or the largest smartphones (or 'phablets'). An ideal solution would be a third design.

Consider serving images dynamically to provide lower resolution versions for smaller devices to enhance speed.

Device detection can be server –side or client-side. Server-side detection is usually more suitable for larger, enterprise-level organisations.

External resources

- Mobile Site vs Full Site
- Organizing Mobile

☐ 37. Show the same content to mobile users and search bots

Why it's important

The huge growth in mobile traffic to websites means a mobile-accessible version of your website is essential. But you need to make sure that any mobile-optimisation doesn't interfere with crawling, indexing and ranking either the mobile or desktop version.

Google recommends sites use responsive design to serve the same HTML on the same URLs, by using CSS to change how the page appears on each device. This also means you do not need to block any Google crawlers. The other options are to dynamically server different HTML and CSS on the

same URL, or to use separate mobile URLs. Both these options require additional work to flag to Google which versions should be crawled for mobile.

Getting it done

Responsive design does not need any specific robots.txt instructions for search engine crawlers. If you serve different HTML you'll need to request Google to crawl the page for mobile content, while different URLs will need "alternate" and "canonical" rel tags in place.

Verify your Mobile Site in Google Search Console (formerly Webmaster Tools) or Bing Webmaster Tools, and Build and Submit a Mobile Sitemap.

If you have unique urls for mobile pages, then these will need to earn popularity and links individually.

Mobile titles, urls, and meta descriptions should be highly relevant and concise.

External resources

- Building Smartphone-Optimized Websites
- First Steps Performing A Mobile SEO Audit

□ 38. Have a clear and easy to use navigation system

Why it's important

Lost and frustrated visitors don't convert into customers. Instead they share their negative impression of your website with their friends.

Wherever someone lands on your website, they should be able to find where to go via clear and consistent navigation that easily leads them to the solution they need.

Getting it done

Use clear and consistent navigation. Use natural words familiar to visitors, with a clear hierarchy to help them navigate around.

Clear titles, headings and breadcrumbs can help users to establish where they are in your website structure, and jump to the right level quickly. You can also highlight the current page or section via your navigation.

A HTML sitemap may be helpful for users in addition to a dynamic XML version for search engines. Don't use navigation options that stop search engines seeing your categories, sub-categories and other site structure information.

Help functions, such as site search or live chat should be clearly displayed on each page.

Monitor your internal site search for indications of failed navigation, particularly when users are frequently searching for important content that should be obvious.

Optimize your 404 Error Page to get users back on course quickly and effectively.

External resources

- Site Navigation and Information Architecture
- Breadcrumbs: Examples and Best Practices
- Planning and implementing navigation

□ 39. Optimize Frames & iFramesUsage

Why it's important

Frames and iFrames are largely a legacy problem on older websites, used as a way to display separate and distinct documents and websites within the same Internet browser window. They were largely used to lower the user bandwith required for viewing, and have become redundant with faster Internet access widely available.

They should be avoided as search engines do not crawl or index content within them.

Getting it done

Avoid using Frames or iFrames.

Where cost and resource effective, convert valuable content to appear normally on the page and within your HTML code.

If a Frame is a necessity, use a NoFrames tag to provide alternate content for search engines and where frames are not supported by browsers.

External resources

NoFrames Tag

□ 40. Optimize any Flash Usage

Why it's important

Flash software was widely used by websites to display animations, games and vector graphics. Best practice for search engine optimisation and usability is to avoid it unless required for specific

applications.

It is possible for Google to index Flash content, but many websites have now switched to using HTML5 as an alternative for video playback, particularly as this alternative offers mobile compatibility. Apple mobile devices such as the iPhone and iPad do not support Flash content directly.

Getting it done

Avoid using Flash as much as possible, unless it is strictly necessary.

Google will index text within Flash content, but not images, videos, or buttons without associated text.

Adobe has announced the withdrawal of support for Flash on mobile devices, a large source of traffic for most websites.

Avoid using Flash for your entire website, particularly for your site navigation. You'll need to add HTML Elements to flash files for better indexation.

External resources

- How to optimize Flash for SEO
- How Google Indexes Flash Content
- How to use Google Analytics for Flash

41. Develop an overall social media marketing plan

Why it's important

Without an overall plan and objectives, attempts at social media marketing are doomed to failure. Although social media is often seen as free, it takes time, resources and increasingly some paid promotion to deliver results.

Make sure you're successful by researching and planning which networks are most appropriate for your business goals, and how you'll publish and engage on them. By putting a plan in place, you'll also have appropriate measures for success.

Getting it done

Social Media Marketing takes time to build momentum. Plan how to build your audience over time using content, promotions, competitions and paid options most effectively.

Monitor revenue based metrics above those for awareness, such as Likes or Retweets. Experiment to find which networks and content are most effective at increasing revenue, or are more appropriate for awareness and customer service functions.

Ensure you have guidelines in place for all employees who are interacting with business or personal profiles, and clear rules for profile ownership and crisis response.

Allow room in your plans for quick responses to newsworthy and trending topics and content, and for experimentation as platforms and audiences will continue to evolve over time.

Make sure you're aware of the latest platform terms and conditions to avoid having profiles suspended or deleted.

External resources

- List of 50 Free Social Media Tools
- Tips to Improve Social Media Audience Engagement
- Social Media and SEO

42. Engage and promote within your Facebook presence

Why it's important

It's no longer good enough just to have a Facebook page for your business. With every company competing for attention, simply posting generic text updates is not enough to give you the visibility you need to reach out to your audience.

Without using all the tools available to engage with your audience and build a following, there's no reason for your Facebook presence to generate any return for your business.

Getting it done

Ensure your page is optimized and you respond to Facebook page layout and design changes.

In addition to posting on your page as your business, you can also use Facebook as your brand rather than your individual profile (use the Settings gear icon to switch).

Experiment with content frequency. General best practice is once per day, but image updates can work with more frequency, particularly around occasions and events. It can also be worth posting both a text and image version of an update, separated by a few hours.

Hashtags have been introduced to Facebook to group updates around topics. Use logical choices in your updates, along with tagging relevant pages.

Consider boosting your content with paid promotion – use targeting to ensure it is shown to the right audience.

External resources

• 5 Facebook Marketing Ideas for Small Businesses

- 5 Ways Top Brands Use Facebook
- Facebook Page Promotion Tips

□ 43. Engage and promote within your Twitter presence

Why it's important

Although the Twitter active user base is smaller than that of Facebook, it has been described as the nervous system of the Internet for the spread of content and information.

Although Twitter has a large general audience, it is used by a higher number of bloggers, writers, journalists and marketers, making it a great way to distribute news and resources. As a result it's also more likely to result in other sites picking up your content and linking back to you.

Getting it done

Ensure your brand name is registered and your profile is optimized for Twitter's profile design. Your background image can be used for additional information, contact details etc.

Use your bio to list relevant keywords as the description for your business to aid finding your profile.

Updates can be made at a relatively high frequency, including repeating earlier updates, as the Twitter stream means many followers might not see content when it is first posted.

Putting a full stop before replies to other Twitter users enables everyone to see your response e.g .@company

Use relevant hashtags, but don't overdo it, and never use irrelevant topics simply because they're trending.

Images have become more integrated into Twitter. Upload images alongside linking to articles.

Use Twitter tools to research your audience, manage accounts and help to report on metrics.

External resources

- <u>Tips to Promote Your Business on Twitter</u>
- 10 Free Twitter Tools For All Your Twitter Marketing Needs

44. Engage and promote within your LinkedIn presence

Why it's important

As a business-focused network, LinkedIn is valuable for connecting with a range of companies and individuals, including vendors, potential employees and more.

It's also a valuable research tool to understand more about your clients and other companies.

Getting it done

In addition to setting up and optimizing your main Company page, spend time creating your products and/or services pages for each area that you offer. Separate business units can also be given a Showcase page.

Make sure your name is available to employees so that they list themselves correctly on their own profile, and areas such as Contact Details are available for journalists and writers researching your company.

Use targeted updates to tailor your audience to the most relevant people for a particular content. Audience can be boosted by paying to sponsor your update.

LinkedIn Groups can be useful, but check to see how active they are. Dormant groups offer little value – consider creating your own if you have the resource to actively grow it as a community.

External resources

- <u>5 LinkedIn Company Page Tips</u>
- 27 LinkedIn Social Media Marketing Tactics

□ 45. Use Metadata and Markup to stand out in Search Results

Why it's important

There's little point achieving a high ranking in search results if no-one clicks through to visit your website as a result. By optimizing the way your site appears, you can ensure your site stands out against your competitors and receives more traffic.

Getting it done

Titles: Only the first 70 characters will be shown, so keep them short (6-8 words maximum), include your keywords as early as possible, and make them appealing for users.

Meta Description/Snippet: 160 characters of your Meta Description will be shown. Make it relevant, include your keywords, but the main purpose is to encourage people to click through and visit your website.

Rich Snippets/Structured Data: Make the best use of website data such as e-commerce product specifications and prices, ratings, reviews etc., by marking them up on your website using Microdata,

Microformats or RDFa to identify the data on your pages. There is also a drag-and-drop 'Data Highlighter' tool within Google Search Console (formerly Webmaster Tools).

External resources

- Google Structured Data Testing Tool and Markup Helper
- Microformats and Schema

□ 46. Generate XML Sitemaps featuring your site content

Why it's important

An XML Sitemap helps you to make sure search engines are crawling and indexing all applicable pages for your website (You may need to use several XML Sitemaps if you have more than 10,000 pages or to focus on different types of content, such as images or videos).

By ensuring your Sitemap is easily found and submitting it to Google Search Console (formerly Webmaster Tools) and Bing Webmaster Tools you can specify the priority for different content, how often it is updated, and when the last changes took place to make sure new content is being highlighted. A Dynamic Sitemap generator will mean latest content will be automatically added to it, rather than requiring manual updates.

It's important to only include pages that you want the search engines to crawl, so avoid any that have been blocked via your robots.txt file. Check the URLs to ensure that none of them cause redirects or return error codes. This includes being consistent with your URLs, for example, including your preferred URLs (with or without www.), including the correct protocol (http or https) and making sure URLs all end with or without a trailing slash.

Getting it done

XML Sitemaps don't guarantee all pages listed will be crawled but it greatly increases your chances.

A Sitemap index file is required if you use multiple Sitemaps (either due to the size of your site, or using specific Sitemaps for images, video etc).

Sitemaps should also be listed in your robots.txt file.

Test your sitemap using free validation tools, and checking it when adding to Google Search Console (formerly Webmaster Tools) and Bing Webmaster Tools.

By producing a Sitemap and comparing the quantity of pages versus the number indexed by search engines, you can discover other problems with your site such as duplicate content or robots.txt errors.

External resources

• The Official Sitemap Protocol

- XML Sitemap Generator
- Technical Guide to Creating a Sitemap

□ 47. Optimize your site paginated pages

Why it's important

Splitting eCommerce product inventory or website content over multiple pages can cause issues from a search engine perspective as well as for usability.

The first issue is that search engines prefer content to be accessible in the minimum number of clicks, so deeper, paginated content may not be crawled. In addition, pagination can lead to a host of problems with duplicate content, and splitting articles or reviews can mean that you don't have enough unique content on each page for it to be indexed separately.

Getting it done

For large paginated listings, adding further sub-categories will help indexing and user conversions. And it's far better than trying to link to every piece of paginated content from one page.

Check for duplicate page titles and meta descriptions.

The preferred choice for most issues is to create a separate 'View All' page and canonicalize to that from each paginated option.

Where this is impractical, use Rel="prev"/"next" HTML attributes to create a chain through your pages.

The last option would be to remove paginated content with no value from the search engine index by using a Meta Robots NoIndex, Follow tag on those pages.

Try to benchmark how paginated content is currently performing via your server logs to judge the success of your work, and doublecheck the implementation, particularly rel="prev"/"next".

External resources

- Google Webmaster Central on rel="next" and rel "prev"
- The Latest & Greatest On SEO Pagination

□ 48. Encourage reviews, links and referrals from customers and clients

Why it's important

Hopefully your customers and clients are happy with the products or services you've supplied. So you could be benefitting from reviews, links and referrals from them.

All reviews and referrals should be enabled as naturally as possible to avoid accusations of faking or manipulating reviews. If reviews can be submitted to your website, don't forget to also encourage recommendations on external sites as well, including your Google+ Business Page – scores and reviews also appear on Facebook Pages.

Getting it done

If you allow reviews on your site, use relevant HTML Markup to ensure these can be picked up by search engines and used in search results. Alternatively, highlight client success in case studies to encourage mentions of your business.

Track negative reviews and respond wherever they are posted (review sites, Q&A sites, forums). Often this will defuse further complaints and turns negative feelings into positive ones for your business or website. Try to respond promptly, even if the solution takes more time.

Monitor your brand mentions across social media – Google+ is particularly relevant for search, but other networks can be aggregated, reposted or republished.

If you include links as a signature in client sites, ensure these are brand mentions rather than using keywords.

External resources

- <u>List of Review Sites</u>
- Free Media Monitoring Tools: <u>Topsy</u>, <u>Google Alerts</u>, <u>Twitter Search</u>, <u>Social Mention</u>
- Online Reviews Research

49. Optimize your existing external links

Why it's important

Your website may already be getting mentions and links from external sites. By reaching out to the authors and website owners, you can ensure that you're not missing out on useful recommendations and traffic.

It's also important for your brand and usability that you're not being linked for irrelevant terms, or that existing links haven't been broken over time if you have changed domains, or moved pages and content to new URLs.

Getting it done

Check for mentions of your brand or website, and see if they are linked. If so, are the links using relevant or brand terms?

Whenever domains are changed or pages and content are moved, check for links to those pages and try to get them updated (Also ensure 301 redirects are in place on changed content to preserve as much linking benefit as possible).

When contacting authors and site owners, be polite, helpful and understanding. Not everyone will go back to a 3-year-old post to update links, but supplying the correct details will help.

Make sure you're monitoring optimization of existing links alongside new link generation to keep the right balance of keyword and brand links.

Monitor news, blogs, social media and forums for mentions of your brand.

External resources

- 16 Free Keyword Research Tools
- <u>Guide to using unlinked brand mentions</u>Free Media Monitoring Tools: <u>Topsy</u>, <u>Google Alerts</u>, <u>Twitter Search</u>, <u>Social Mention</u>

50. Establish guest blogging collaborations with relevant industry blogs

Why it's important

By writing for established and relevant sites, you can build an audience for your brand, and ensure that you are associated with quality publications.

Many larger sites will already have established guest blogging procedures in place, ensuring that they follow search engine guidelines. Most should also ensure Google+ Authorship is in place, raising your social profile. It also enables you to build an on-going business relationship which can benefit in other ways.

Getting it done

Research which sites in your niche have a sizeable audience and quality reputation. Spend time looking at any guest blogging guidelines they have available.

Choose relevant subjects and keywords to build your articles around. Check to see whether you can offer something new or insightful. Can you offer a new angle to ensure your article stands out? Unique and valuable content is always more likely to be featured.

Try to build a relationship with those working for the target websites. This could be through social media, industry events, or by building on initial answers you could provide via services such as Help

A Reporter Out, Quora etc. Don't overlook your existing network of family, friends and business contacts for a way to establish contact.

Help to promote and share your guest blogs as you would for your own site. And ensure that your own properties are optimized for the subject if readers are then looking for your business as a result.

External resources

- Guest Blogging for SEO
- Tips for Guest Blogging

51. Obtain links by covering and attending to your industry's events

Why it's important

Industry events are a great way to raise your profile and awareness of your business, and with an increasing number of online webinars, Google hangouts and other events, you may not even need time out of your office.

Create a list of local, national and global events in your industry and look at ways to present, cover, or sponsor.

Getting it done

Look for local events and groups. Consider starting your own if nothing appropriate exists as it doesn't take more than a local venue with a spare room and sharing the details. Share via Facebook and Google + Event listings.

Join industry events online or host your own. Google Hangouts are great for running public discussions and easily sharing that content later via Youtube. Take some time to check your webcam and audio quality and lighting, which can easily look great for a very small investment.

If you're starting out, Unconferences and similar events allow you to volunteer for speaking and presenting. Make sure you share your presentation on sites such as Slideshare, and see if your presentation can be broadcasted, recorded and shared.

Cover industry events via your own blog and social media channels, or volunteer to report on them for larger industry websites who will often be grateful to save sending their own staff.

Event sponsorship requires a larger financial investment but avoids the cost in time and other resources.

- Event listings such as Meetup, Zvents, Yelp
- Local Business Community Strategy

• Benefits of a Google Hangout

52. Grow the engagement from your community

Why it's important

Discounts and offers are some of the most popular reasons for customers to follow brands via social media. They also provide a great route to building an audience and reaching new people, particularly as Facebook has relaxed the rules on how competitions can be promoted.

In addition to your website and social media, there are also a number of dedicated forums for bargain hunters, or sections of established niche sites which may also be applicable. It's worth preparing a set of terms and conditions for competition entries that can quickly be tailored to each contest.

Getting it done

Think about how to make competitions and offers quick and easy for anyone to share with friends and contacts. Every potential barrier to sharing will lower your reach so data capture should be balanced with the effect on completion.

Research what customers and competitors are already doing to promote competitions and discounts. Use mechanisms that are already shown to be effective.

It's more cost effective to retain repeat customers than attract new ones – look at rewarding loyalty and referrals with exclusive special offers and discounts.

Research and use general special offer and discount sites, and check sites and forums within your niche for areas which allow offers to be promoted.

Can you provide an extra prize or discount on blogs or websites that promote your offer, particularly local and relevant niche sites?

External resources

- How to Use Coupons to Promote a Business
- Facebook updates rules on Page Competitions

□ 53. Establish and measure your site Social KPIs and Conversions target

Why it's important

Converting visitors into prospects/clients is probably the most important goal for your website. One of the most common ways to do this is by adding a conversion form to your website. It might be a call to action to sign up for your newsletter, register for a class, trial your product or download a free ebook. Whatever it is, having contact information from your site visitors means that you can follow up by email (or phone) with your potential customers.

Getting it done

First, choose your conversion goal and call to action (CTA). Think about who your ideal customer is and what they are looking for on your site. Create a CTA that fits their needs: are they looking for a first purchase discount code, a how-to ebook or a "stay up-to-date" newsletter?

Second, decide which information you need. It's generally a best practice to ask for as little information as possible in order to make the process quick and easy for your site visitor.

Third, choose a way to create your form and insert it on your site. You might use a form creation tool provided by your email marketing campaign software, a <u>form service</u>, a specialized conversion tool or ask your development team to customize one for your needs.

Basic Tips:

- If you choose to include a longer form, try dividing it into two parts.
- If you're offering a product or service, consider creating a pop-up form on your homepage that offers a first purchase discount by filling it out.
- Assure your visitors that they won't be spammed and their information won't be shared.
- Make it clear which information you want in each field.
- Create a clear CTA for your form's button, such as "Download the Free E-book".
- Set up an autoresponder mailing system. Check if your country requires double opt-in.
- Autofill information from the IP address.
- Optimize your forms for mobile.

External resources

- <u>18 Conversion Optimization Tools To Gain More Clients With Your Website</u>
- 7 Conversion Tactics You Should Be Using but Probably Aren't
- The Psychology Behind High Converting Sites

54. Establish and measure your siteMobile KPIs and Conversions target

Why it's important

Each traffic source to your business and website should be measured in line with their different aims and objectives. Not every visitor is created equal.

Mobile visitors are likely to be more driven by immediate information, booking and purchasing than desktop users who are researching potential purchases. If you have physical locations, a quick and easy access to contact and address information is also key.

Getting it done

Check how your website performs on mobile devices, and consider how to display a more effective design to those users, optimized for mobile screen sizes and bandwidth.

Set appropriate KPIs for the different objectives, access and abilities of mobile users. For instance, a touchscreen isn't the best method to fill out huge text fields or forms.

Identify Landing Pages for mobile visitors, and optimize them with clear Call To Actions. Consider specific landing page designs, including larger linked buttons for touchscreens.

Re-arrange information most suitable for mobile users. For instance, address and location details, or SMS updates and services.

Avoid interstitials and pop-ups to recommend Apps and other mobile services. Instead use text and graphics on your page to minimise bandwith, avoiding usability and SEO issues.

External resources

- Setting Mobile KPIs
- 10 Web Analytics Tools other than Google Analytics
- Google smartphone search results changes

□ 55. Establish and measure your site Local KPIs and Conversions target

Why it's important

Each traffic source to your business and website should be measured in line with their different aims and objectives. Not every visitor is created equal.

Local visitors will cross over between desktop, mobile and potentially in-store activity. But they are likely to be loyal, regular customers who will recommend your business as being part of their local neighbourhood. In addition, you may wish to include KPIs relating to your local business network, or pool or potential employees.

Getting it done

Check the local breakdown of your current visitors in your analytics package. This may be slightly skewed at a city level by the location of their Internet service provider.

Use custom URLs for local online and offline promotions to segment visitors to your site from your region. When promoting via social media, use geographic filtering to show unpaid posts and paid promotions only to relevant audiences.

Check with telephone and in-store customers to find out any website usage and how they have utilised it.

Use Advanced Segments in analytics to allow you to split out and report on local website behaviour and conversions.

External resources

- Google Analytics Advanced Segments
- How to use Advanced Segments
- Analytics URL Builder

□ 56. Get in touch and develop visibility with your sector influencers

Why it's important

Business networking and reputation can be built up relatively quickly online by becoming an active participant in important and popular sites. These can include industry websites, popular blogs, and Question and Answer sites.

By consistently providing relevant and valuable information, you can build your social profile, earn niche traffic for your site, and open yourself for new business leads and opportunities.

Getting it done

Pick a manageable, relevant list of sites to monitor and build on. It's better to become respected in smaller communities first, rather than struggling to stand out in larger groups.

It's generally better to respond as an individual business owner/staff member than being anonymous under your business or website name. This is a particular spam signal in blog comments.

Ensure you are always respectful, polite, and offer relevant information without becoming patronizing to those who know less, or trying to fit in irrelevant subjects and back to your site.

Provide relevant and useful advice. If your information includes recommendations for your services or products, ensure you disclose your position with the company/business.

If there are multiple people networking for your website or business, spend some time creating and sharing a guideline document, so everyone is clear on the style and approach to use.

General question sites include Yahoo Answers and Quora, but check for specialist industry sites, such as Stack Overflow.

External resources

• Find top blogs in your niche: Technorati, Ebuzzing

□ 57. Analyze the gathered metrics to improve the conversion of the site

Why it's important

The only valuable metrics for any business are those that result in action and improvement. After setting up and analysing your analytics reports, you should be able to pinpoint the areas that need improvement.

Once you've isolated the correct areas, you can then go into deeper detail to identify specific improvements to a page or section, or look at testing potential solutions. The main aim should always be to reduce any friction felt by users as they journey towards a goal conversion.

Getting it done

Identify the metrics for customers early in the buying cycle or those who might convert via telephone sales or visiting your business location. Segment these into awareness and research areas.

Identify the pages that should be part of your Goal or Conversion funnels and isolate the biggest drops in potential customers. Try to reduce the number of clicks to successfully complete goals.

Look at your most popular landing pages, where people arrive from search, referrals and other sources: Do they visit other pages or immediately leave? (Check your Bounce Rate).

Check Search Queries and Internal Site Search for popular questions that may need an answer, or where the solutions may be hidden by a lack of clear navigation and internal linking.

External resources

- 15 Point Conversion Checlist
- The Best Web Analytics Tools
- Measure your Real Conversion Rate in 10 minutes

□ 58. Low Impact:

□ 59. Register your domain for additional years and buy top country extensions

Why it's important

Anyone can buy a domain name and usually at a low cost. If you invest in registering for your domain for several years or more, it's an additional signal to search engines that you are committed to your business. It is also worth securing the top-level country domains such as .co.uk in addition to .com to avoid the risk of imposters and competitors causing confusion, or users guessing your URL incorrectly.

You also avoid having to remember to renew your domain name every year – forget, and you may find someone else picks it up.

Getting it done

Additional domains should be redirected to your main website using 301 Redirects.

These additional top-level country domains can also be used for your international Web presence.

Investing for several years usually results in a discount on your domain purchase.

External resources

Best Long Term SEO Tactics

□ 60. Optimize the content of your mobile version

Why it's important

Mobile traffic and search volumes have grown massively over recent years to be a substantial part of any website, particularly in location-based industries. If users can't find your site on their mobile, you're losing a large amount of potential revenue.

Start by researching your current mobile traffic and trends via your analytics software and look at your top mobile queries and pages within Google Search Console (formerly Webmaster Tools) or Bing Webmaster Tools.

Getting it done

Use Google Search Console (formerly Webmaster Tools) or Bing Webmaster Tools to check for Mobile Crawl issues and to fetch your mobile pages.

Use Google PageSpeed Insights to optimise your mobile pages for shorter load times and lower bandwith devices.

Titles, URLs and Meta Descriptions should be highly relevant and concise.

Ensure you are using Structured Data for both desktop and mobile

Use Google+ for Business to improve your presence on Search and Maps.

Use a mobile emulator to see how your website displays before and after any changes, and a tool like User Agent Switcher for Firefox to check mobile search results on your desktop. External resources

- Google PageSpeed Insights
- About Rich Snippets and Structured Data
- Google My Business
- Mobile Phone Emulator
- User Agent Switcher Firefox Add-On

61. Utilise Meta Robots Tags on individual site pages

Why it's important

The Robots Meta Tag allows you to control the indexation and appearance on search results for individual pages. In addition to stopping all, or specific, search engine robots from indexing a page, it can also be used to indicate all links on a page should be 'NoFollow' and pass no popularity.

These instructions should be included in the section of the page HTML.

Getting it done

Use the meta robots "NoIndex, Follow" directive to avoid the indexation of a page or set of pages but allow their links to be followed by search crawlers.

NOODP will block the Open Directory Project (Dmoz.org) description of a page from being displayed if required.

- About the <u>Robots tag</u>
- Google's Robots meta tag specification

□ 62. Keep a Consistent Layout Throughout Your Website

Why it's important

A consistent layout allows users to easily move through your website. This avoids any pause that can lead to users leaving or reconsidering a purchase.

The location of important navigation should remain the same throughout your website, colours and design should also remain consistent so that users can scan for familiar visual clues.

Getting it done

Designing pages on a clear grid structure can help to ensure a consistent layout.

While content within the page may change for different functions, the surrounding navigation and other elements should stay consistent.

Desktop and Mobile versions of the site should be consistent for each platform, ideally with the same design elements, even if the layout changes for smartphones and mobile devices.

Keep important navigation elements clear and accessible to all users and search engine crawlers.

External resources

- A brief Look at Grid-Based Layouts in Web Design
- 16 Tools for Responsive Web Design: Grids and Wireframe
- Typography, Images and Videos for Responsive Web Design
- Testing Tools for Responsive Web Design

□ 63. Optimize the usage of interstitials and splash pages

Why it's important

Splash pages and interstitials are overlays or pages which appear before or after the expected content. They can be used for age restrictions, subscriptions and paywalls for content, or to show advertising or other information before a user reaches their desired content.

There are several considerations when using a splash page or interstitial besides personal browsing preferences.

Getting it done

Ensure these pages are not indexed in preference to your content or even your homepage. For example, use an AJAX overlay for splash pages, and Javascript for interstitial ads to avoid search engines seeing them. Cookies can be used to set the frequency for visitors.

Both options interrupt the user experience so make sure the value outweighs the potential loss in traffic due to users needing an extra click. Is your content compelling enough to be worth the extra effort?

Consider mobile traffic – Google explicitly frown on interstitials shown when visiting a mobile website.

Also check the effect on page load times, as this may affect your rankings. As may happen most users give up on your site and bounce back to search results rather than continuing.

Avoid splash pages for multi-country sites by recognizing visitor locations by their IP address, or detecting their browser language to suggest the correct page.

External resources

Google Interstitial Advice for Mobile Visitors

□ 64. Optimize your site videos

Why it's important

Videos are often highlighted in search results, so optimizing for the right keywords will get your videos found by your target customers.

In addition to search results, it will also ensure your content is found on video sharing sites, which have extremely large and diverse audiences, even if this is in addition to hosting your own videos.

Getting it done

Plan videos around specific keywords/phrases and aim to answer popular questions or topics for your business and industry.

Offer tutorials and guides for customers, which can be add value to your site and product listings.

Where possible, publish transcriptions for each video, which will then be indexed by search engines.

Make sure you're including relevant keywords in your titles and descriptions when you upload to video sharing sites. Include a link back to your site in the description and as an annotation where possible (e.g. Youtube).

Creating a series of videos will enable you to build your audience and optimization over time.

Include a Video Sitemap and Video Rich Snippets on your site.

In addition to the full videos, share smaller clips via Vine and Instagram.

External resources

- Video Hosting for Optimized Video SEO
- Video Snippets and Sitemaps
- Video Marketing

☐ 65. Clean your HTMLs from non-relevant information

Why it's important

It's important to have good, clean code for your website to ensure that search engines can index it correctly, visitors can access it properly, and your page load times are as low as possible.

One way to measure your code is to validate it against the World Wide Web Consortium (W3C) tests. Although this doesn't directly impact your SEO rankings, it does ensure that your website is accessible for search engines and visitors, including those who may be visually impaired or have other accessibility issues.

Getting it done

Accessibility is important for all users, but particularly for those who may have a disability or impairment. Meeting those requirements also ensures search engine crawlers won't experience problems.

Passing the W3C compliance test with 100% can be difficult and time-consuming, so it's important to prioritise the biggest issues against the cost of correction.

Modern browsers can cope with some broken code, and have varying standards of their own, so it's good to test across browsers and mobile/tablet devices as much as possible to meet W3C standards.

Incorrect or inefficient code may have an impact on page load times, which can directly affect rankings. However, despite this, creating good content and optimising other areas of your site is often enough to achieve high rankings.

- Official W3C Validator
- HTML Compliance: Myth and Reality

☐ 66. Promote your content with your community in social networks

Why it's important

Social networks command huge audiences, who spend a large amount of time and effort in online communities.

By reaching out to where your customers are spending time, you're able to engage with existing and new business. Benefits also include increasing social signals for your website, potentially cutting customer service costs, better insights into your customers and preventing rivals or other users registering your brand which can be problematic to recover.

Getting it done

Register your brand name on the main social networks to avoid others claiming it either accidentally or on purpose. Several sites exist to check your brand availability across a wide range of networks.

Social Media sites cover a huge range of purposes, including reviews, discussions, photo sharing, document sharing and video. Spend time optimizing those that make sense for your business and the content. Others can be set to private, or left with a profile and message pointing users to the most relevant channel you're active on.

Ensure you use quality imagery and content for your company profiles and biographies. Include links, contact details and other relevant information.

If you're also using personal social media profiles, ensure these are kept separate, including using entirely different social media management tools for business and non-business activity.

Aim to publish content consistently according to an overall social media plan. Ensure every active business member has clear guidelines for activity and knows how to respond appropriately to complaints and issues.

External resources

- Examples of Blogging and Social Media Guidelines
- Social Media Branding Techniques
- Social Media Username Searches: NameChk, CheckUsernames, Knowem

67. Distribute frequent press releases with relevant news about your company

Why it's important

Press releases remain an effective and viable distribution system for news about your business, particularly for the hundreds and thousands of websites that you might not have resources to contact individually.

Getting it done

Press releases should be written to provide newsworthy information about your company. Follow advice for making sure journalists and bloggers have the information they require, and avoid promotional waffle which will be disregarded.

Assets such as images and videos can be made available on your own properties for viewing or embedding in articles, as well as being available to download for use by companies covering your press release.

Don't fill your releases with heavily optimized anchor text as Google specifically mentioned this as unnatural linking. Stick to the most relevant one or two examples, combined with useful brand links.

If you're publishing the same information on your own website, ensure the text is as unique as possible, and that it appears before your release is distributed. If your website content is mainly identical to your press releases, and appears after other websites have published it, you may end up running into duplicate content issues.

External resources

- How to write and distribute press releases
- Distribution services include <u>BusinessWire</u>, <u>i-Newswire</u>, <u>PR.com</u>, <u>SBWire</u>, <u>PRLeap</u>, <u>PR Newswire</u>

□ 68. Submit your site to authority and relevant directories

Why it's important

There are various benefits to submitting your site to quality directories. These include any direct traffic, diversifying the types of sites linking to you, and improvements to ranking in search results.

Although search engines have targeted low quality, spam directories for penalties, there are still plenty of high value sites that can be utilised. But it is more important than ever to pursue quality rather than quantity.

Getting it done

Avoid low cost and automatic submission services as they are likely to create inaccurate listings on low quality sites.

Look for high quality, respected sites. These can be global, such as DMOZ, but more are likely to be

industry-based, or location-based. Trusted local authorities and organisations often provide business listings for an area. Look for those which are edited and reviewed by staff.

Add directory listings gradually over time, ensuring you have unique titles and descriptions for each.

Many quality directories may NoFollow their links, which will not pass search engine juice. However, they are still useful listings to potentially send traffic to your site, and to ensure a balanced link profile.

External resources

Quality Check Guidelines for Web Directories

□ 69. Interact in most important communities in your sector

Why it's important

Online communities are a valuable way to connect with your peers and exchange information, advice and business leads.

Public communities and forums can provide links directly where relevant, but many industry groups may be private and invitation only. These provide a safer way to ask questions, and can also lead to link and guest post opportunities.

Getting it done

Find out which communities are recommended by respected industry influencers.

Be helpful and humble when joining these communities, and seek to participate and add value. Focus on quality and consistent interaction, rather than signing up to every community and never having time to even check them all.

In addition to specialist online communities, check your local area for online and offline business networking and learning communities.

Utilise opportunities to guest post, provide quotes, and also to promote other community members. For instance, create a valuable blog post on your site by asking your community for their opinions on a question or topic.

Consider providing discounts or free products or services to your communities to encourage them to provide reviews or testimonials

Open public forums used predominantly for linking should be popular (1000 members+), have a good number of posts with more being added every day, and should be easily found via search for related terms.

- Guidelines for Using Forums
- Build Site Authority with Forum Participation

□ 70. Include and configure social share buttons

Why it's important

There's no denying the huge impact of social media on marketing. Social share buttons provide an easy way for visitors to spread the word about your products or services to their network of friends, providing valuable advocacy.

By ensuring social shares are tagged and monitored via your analytics package, you'll be able to identify which content works best for generating awareness, and see which networks are most likely to covert to revenue.

Getting it done

Pick the most relevant networks for each content type and consider button placements. While you may want prominent locations on articles, you don't want to add social distractions next to the purchase button on an eCommerce site.

Ensure your page titles and meta data are correct as these are often included by default when a page or image is shared on a social network.

Take this further by optimizing for enhanced display, such as Twitter Cars and Pinterest Rich Pins.

Track which networks provide the best awareness and conversions. This can be augmented by proactive social media marketing or paid promotions.

External resources

- How to Add Social Sharing Buttons to Your Website
- <u>Twitter Buttons</u>
- Facebook Buttons
- Google +1 Buttons
- Pinterest Rich Pins Validator

☐ 71. Enhance your site security against spam

Why it's important

Website hacking attempts have risen hugely as the Internet has become an integral part of our lives. If you website is hacked and used to spread viruses or other malware, used for scams or to manipulate search results, it is likely to be banned from search engine results. In addition it can also be placed on blacklists by antivirus companies and national internet filters.

Finally it's much cheaper to avoid being hacked than to invest in clearing up the problems it can cause.

Getting it done

Ensure all website software is on the latest stable version as older programs are a prime way to attack a site.

Make sure all website staff practice IT security best practices, including unique and secure passwords.

Regularly check if your site is not blocked by antivirus sites.

External resources

- Tips to Fix Badware
- Google Information on Malware

□ 72. Optimize your local business presence in relevant local communities

Why it's important

Social proof is an incredibly powerful recommendation for a brand, whether customers read reviews or see that friends have recently visited.

By making sure your profiles are as optimized as possible it makes it easier and more effective when they are shared or viewed.

Getting it done

Invest in suitable assets, such as some attractive photography of your location. Or encourage customers to share their best photos for your business.

Ensure you have used location listings on general social networks, such as Facebook.

List your business on location-based services such as Foursquare, which allows you to not only create a profile, but also create location lists to market your business. You can also send updates to previous customers when they are nearby.

Make sure you are listed on location based listings such as Yelp, and you're actively monitoring and promptly responding to any negative reviews and complaints.

Look for local and niche-based communities which can allow you to stand out. Local government websites, local business organisations and local newspapers can all be useful.

External resources

- Basic Optimization Tips for Local SEO
- Mobile Apps are Key to Local Businesses

☐ 73. Build an optimized presence in relevant industry targeted social networks

Why it's important

With the increased importance of social signals, it's vital to be engaging via your social networks and not just registering profiles that are then left dormant.

In addition to the impact it has on search, and actively gaining awareness and customers, it also ensures respectable scores on social media ranking tools such as Klout and Peerindex to ensure your business is building a well-rounded reputation and marketing mix.

Getting it done

Realistically plan and allocate time for social network activity. Your core networks will require significant amounts of time to build correctly, although those focused more on sharing documents and videos will need less direct management.

Various tools exist for monitoring and updating your profiles. Utilise these to look for shareable content from other users, and for keyword searches related to your business as well as posting content.

Combining tools can allow you to use their strongest applications. For instance, using Tweetdeck or Hootsuite for active monitoring, but use Buffer for posting content. That allows you to set posting times, and each update will automatically be set up for the next available slot.

Ensure that you record all social media profile names, account details and associated email addresses to ensure that you do not lose access to any of them, and you can update all brand profiles when details require updating.

Spend time analysing the results of your social media engagement to determine which content works best, and what is the optimum publishing schedule.

- How to Manage Social Media Profiles
- Social Media Tools for Maintaining Profiles

☐ 74. Follow-up and evolve your social actions based on your results

Why it's important

Although core marketing techniques remain fairly constant, the way in which they are most effectively applied has never changed faster than in the digital age.

Each social network platform is constantly evolving to try to reach a bigger audience or increase the revenue it makes, and as a result, the most effective social media marketing is constantly adapting to make the most of each new opportunity. And that includes new networks appearing – many big names such as Pinterest didn't exist 5 years ago!

Getting it done

Make sure you are familiar with the metrics and analytics provided by each social platform and what each measurement really means, along with any external tools you are using.

Combine these insights with the results gained from your own website analytics, and how that ties into your business objectives, particularly around revenue growth.

Subscribe or follow the company updates for businesses and marketing on each platform to learn about new changes as they are rolled out.

Evaluate how different content performs across different social media channels. Are particular types of image or video more effective?

Experiment with different approaches to titles and text to see what delivers the most visitors, and whether they are satisfied with what they find (e.g. look at time spent on the landing page and bounce rate). Look at sites with a well-earned social reputation, such as Buzzfeed and Upworthy for inspiration.

Be aware that audiences will tire of some types of updates, particularly when it is being used by numerous businesses, such as basing everything on popular memes.

External resources

• 50 Tools for Social Media Monitoring, Analytics and Management