

HOW TO LEARN SEO FROM HOME

(ECOMMERCE EDITION)

A COMPREHENSIVE INTERMEDIATE
LEVEL GUIDE FROM EKM



THE IMPORTANCE OF SEO FOR AN ECOMMERCE BUSINESS

SEO or search engine optimisation can be one of the most important and difficult tasks to get right for any business, not just online shops. However, it is particularly important for an ecommerce business, especially those in competitive fields.

In this guide, we will take you through the best SEO practices you should be utilising to increase your organic growth and find success for your business, through a source of marketing with one of the highest ROI (return on investment) available in comparison to other marketing channels. Getting a good SEO strategy in place for startups can be a huge help in growing your business further for less.

This guide is for anyone looking to:

- Grow their business with minimal/no costs involved
- Increase the organic traffic to their website
- Outrank competitors by utilising best SEO practices
- Take their SEO knowledge further than the basics

THE RISK OF NOT HAVING AN SEO STRATEGY

As mentioned above it's important to get your SEO right particularly in any competitive fields, if you are being outranked by competitors through organic search you will lose out on sales. A [study carried out by nChannel](#) showed, 44% of people start their online shopping journey through the use of search engines, if you aren't investing any time into getting this right you will be missing out on a large chunk of potential sales. And although you can and should be engaging in the use of paid channels to increase the likelihood of getting visitors to your site from relevant search terms, this can become a very costly method of growth especially for anyone just starting out.

The other advantage you would have on simply not relying on paid search for your whole marketing strategy would be the time-saving aspect attached to SEO. The continuous optimisation of paid channels can become very time consuming. The maintenance required on something that is ranking well organically is a fraction of the time taken for optimising paid channels continuously depending on bidding preferences, click-shares, quality scores, the constant changes being made by the platforms and more.

CARRYING OUT A SITE AUDIT [TEMPLATE INCLUDED]

Before you begin implementing any changes it is vital to understand the current state of your website and how you're currently performing from an organic search point of view. This will give you a much better understanding of any underlying issues you may have which could prevent you from ranking well even if you follow the best practices provided within this guide.

Conducting a full site audit is one of the largest SEO tasks you will carry out, this is due to just how many different aspects of your website you will be analysing. To try and make this step as simple and easy as possible we have provided you with a template which you can copy and use for free. This will give you a place to input your data for easier management. Although this is the first step to carry out you should try and carry out site audits on a regular basis to always stay on top of your strategy and ensure you don't plateau or decrease in traffic coming to your site due to any underlying issues you haven't analysed.

Our template will walk you through the main aspects that should be considered when carrying out a site audit. This sheet will have 6 different sections each colour coded differently depending on the aspect of SEO you will be trying to tackle.



**DOWNLOAD
TEMPLATE**

OVERVIEW - BLACK
CRITICAL ISSUES - RED
CONTENT/KEYWORDS/METADATA - ORANGE
SOCIAL PROOF/STRUCTURED DATA - PURPLE
WEBSITE PERFORMANCE/SERP ANALYSIS - GREEN

TOOLS

PAID VS FREE

As mentioned earlier, site audits can become very time consuming, especially for any large scale websites with a multitude of pages which need to be analysed. Therefore, we will be providing you with a mix of tools both paid and free which you can use to automate this step as much as possible. Getting some of these tools will be necessary in order to carry out an in-depth analysis and to automate the process as much as possible.

FREE



Google Analytics - A key tool for the analysis of any website. Google Analytics is an absolute essential for measuring the performance of your website, the insight this tool can give you is priceless. You can create custom reports to keep track of the key metrics you would like to measure which we will discuss further later on, or you can view the real-time performance of your website to see where visitors are and how they're interacting with your website at any given moment.



Google Search Console - Google Search Console will always be a part of the conversation when discussing SEO. Although this tool does give you insight into performance and the search queries people use to come to your site, this tool can be used in a number of different ways. You can find any underlying issues Google have discovered on your website including any crawl issues which could prevent you from ranking, as well as letting you submit your sitemaps to make sure search engines can navigate through your site as easily as possible.



Google Ads - You might be thinking why on earth have you added Google Ads as a free SEO tool? Well, Google Ads can be extremely useful for keyword research and coming up with content ideas, not just paid ads. If you already invest in paid search you can view the search terms report under your keywords to see exactly what people are searching for before clicking on your ads, however, the other key advantage Google Ads has is the free Keyword Planner tool they provide within the platform. This will allow you to see what kind of keywords you should be trying to rank for i.e. the seasonal forecasts which are especially important within ecommerce for example, when looking for Black Friday or Christmas specific search terms. This tool will provide you with the volume of people looking for these terms and when they have the highest demand.



Google My Business - This tool should be used to enhance your brands SERP (search engine results page) listing. Google my business has many uses , for example, you can collect reviews from it, describe what you do and even promote some of your content and any offers you have through the posts section of the platform allowing you direct traffic to the most valuable places of your site all from a brand search. This tool is particularly useful for local SEO which will be discussed further later on in the guide.



Screaming Frog SEO Spider - Screaming Frog is the first free tool I have listed that isn't from Google and it has its merit to earn that position. It can provide you with a lot of technical SEO information that you need to be considering primarily when you're carrying out your site audits. Although the user interface isn't as clean and sleek as some of the others mentioned, and it can look extremely difficult to use, once you've got the hang of the downloadable software it will be able to provide you with information not many free tools can provide you with all in one go. It must be mentioned that screaming frog is free to use up to 500 URLs which can be crawled, after that you would have to opt for the paid version of the software.



LSIGraph - Isigraph.com is another great tool for researching keywords. LSI (latent semantic indexing) keywords are terms that have an association to the topic you're discussing. Search engines often use this as a method of distinguishing the value of content and can help you to rank higher depending on the quality of keywords you are using. This tool will have a look at the keyword you're trying to target and suggest LSI keywords from similar posts/pages already ranking for the term to let you know what else you should be including and mentioning within your content.



Google Pagespeed Insights - One of the ranking factors becoming increasingly important for search engines is your page/site speed. With Google now prioritising mobile and having a mobile-first approach to ranking, it is essential that your site speed is optimised for mobile. Google Pagespeed Insights will give you the information you require to optimise your site for speed including any information on any images which can be reduced in size as well as any backend files which can be modified to reduce load times.



Ahrefs - A lot of the tools that sit within the paid category have similar features, it's up to you to decide the one that would be most suitable to the metrics you want to track and the aspects of SEO most important to your growth. Ahrefs is one of the most commonly used SEO tools as it has almost every feature you can imagine. I personally love the Dashboard and Rank Tracker sections as they allow you to keep a close eye on competitors, I will discuss the importance of this further in the competitor analysis segment.



SEMRush The biggest advantage SEMRush has, in my opinion, is the detail their keyword magic tool goes into. The ease of use and organisation you can assign to it makes any keyword research tasks really easy to carry out and you can keep your keywords organised for any future use. The user interface is also cleaner and simpler to use and analysing backlink profiles and any on-page analysis can also be much easier through SEMRush.

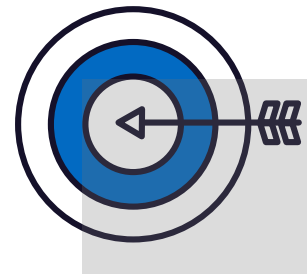


Keywords Everywhere - If you've come across Keywords Everywhere in the past you may be wondering why this tool is under the paid section, this is due to the fact that the tool has recently changed how it operates and is now based on a minimal pricing structure. Having said this, Keywords Everywhere to this day remains my favourite SEO tool. There's no downloadable software it's simply an extension where once you search for a term on google it will provide you with the key metrics for that search term including the volume, keyword difficulty and competition. You may be thinking, but wait, didn't you just provide me with multiple free tools that can carry out keyword research, what makes this different and why is it your favourite? Simply put, it's the ease of use and how accessible it is. Every time I search for any term I get an indicator of how much that keyword is sought after and I'm constantly getting ideas for content to write even when I'm not looking for it.

HONOURABLE MENTIONS

Some other honourable mentions for paid platforms to consider when making a decision include Moz Pro, Majestic and the SEO PowerSuite, all of which have similar traits to SEMRush and Ahrefs.

KEY METRICS / SETTING YOUR SEO GOALS



When you come around to measuring the performance of the changes you're implementing. It is important to understand exactly what metrics you should be paying attention to and what you shouldn't be wasting your valuable time on. Setting goals is the first step to understanding where your focus should lie. What is it exactly you're looking to achieve? Is it more sales? Is it increased brand awareness or do you just want to increase the quality of the visitors coming to your website?

Once you have determined this and compared the data to your existing performance you can work on creating and implementing some of the best practices. There are some metrics that should be measured regardless of the industry you're in or what your overall goal is as these will be direct ranking factors meaning they will impact how you rank on search engines. These metrics include:

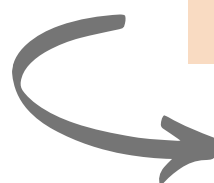
DIRECT WEBSITE VISITORS

So the reason you're looking into implementing some of these best SEO practices is to increase your traffic, so you may be disappointed to hear that this is considered to be one of if not the most important ranking factor, Google above all want to return a search result which is of quality and has high relevance to the users query, therefore, direct website visitors are considered a form of proof for how trustworthy your site is. This is often why you see large online businesses usually ranking really high for search terms with high search volumes.

PAGES/SESSION & AVERAGE SESSION DURATION

Another set of really important metrics include the Pages Per Session and Average Session Duration, you'll come across these often if you're utilising Google Analytics to its capabilities. These, as well as some of the below metrics is what Google sees as a sign of a good website, a key way to increase the performance of these metrics is by improving the user experience of your website. Having good site navigation and a good internal linking structure will allow you to direct people to other pages and sections of your site where they can gather more information, this will in return help increase these which directly helps your website to rank higher.

[GOOGLE ANALYTICS]



BEHAVIOUR

OVERVIEW

KEY METRICS / SETTING YOUR SEO GOALS

BOUNCE RATE

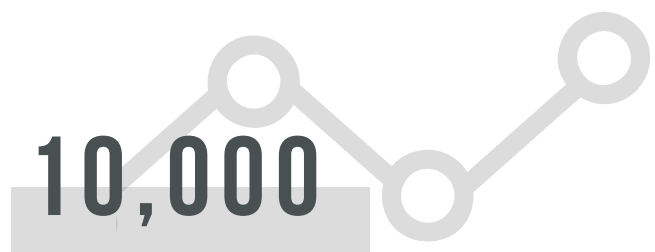
Your bounce rate is once again another metric you'll often come across if you're delving into your site analytics. Bounce Rates and Exit Rates are two completely different metrics which are often misconstrued, however, your bounce rate is a direct ranking factor whereas your exit rate is not.

Your bounce rate is a percentage of the number of sessions where a user has viewed a single page in which there has been no interaction and had a session duration of 0 seconds. This is a factor which can be improved by bringing in a better quality of visitor or increasing your site speed. You'll often get misclicks depending on how you're marketing your website but bringing in a good relevant customer who's interested in learning more about your product or service will reduce this.

Another reason people may leave before even interacting with your site would be your site speed, people who aren't loyal to your brand aren't going to be willing to wait around for your site to load before they can look at the information they require, making this process as short as possible can only benefit you.

REFERRING DOMAINS

Referring domains is another important metric which needs to be considered when analysing any performance and when looking to make changes to your SEO strategy. Referring domains is exactly what it says, it's the number of domains referring to your site through a link. According to a [study carried out by SEMrush](#), 10,000 is the difference in the number of referring domains between the 2nd and 10th position in the high-volume keyword segments on average. This shows if you're looking to rank for high volume search terms and you want to be ranked higher, your backlink strategy needs to be on point.



Is the difference in the number of referring domains between the 2nd and 10th position

[SEMrush]

KEY METRICS / SETTING YOUR SEO GOALS

SERP RANKING

Now, this isn't really a metric which is often mentioned, mainly due to the fact that if you want to track this metric, it will often be very different depending on the platform you're measuring it on. The free method to track this is by checking the average position of a search query through Google Search Console, however, if you have access to Ahrefs you can use the rank tracker feature available to you, so when you implement your changes you can see how this has had an effect on the terms you are trying to rank for, and in the long term, it gives you a much better indicator to see what pages you should optimise if you see a search term dropping its rank.

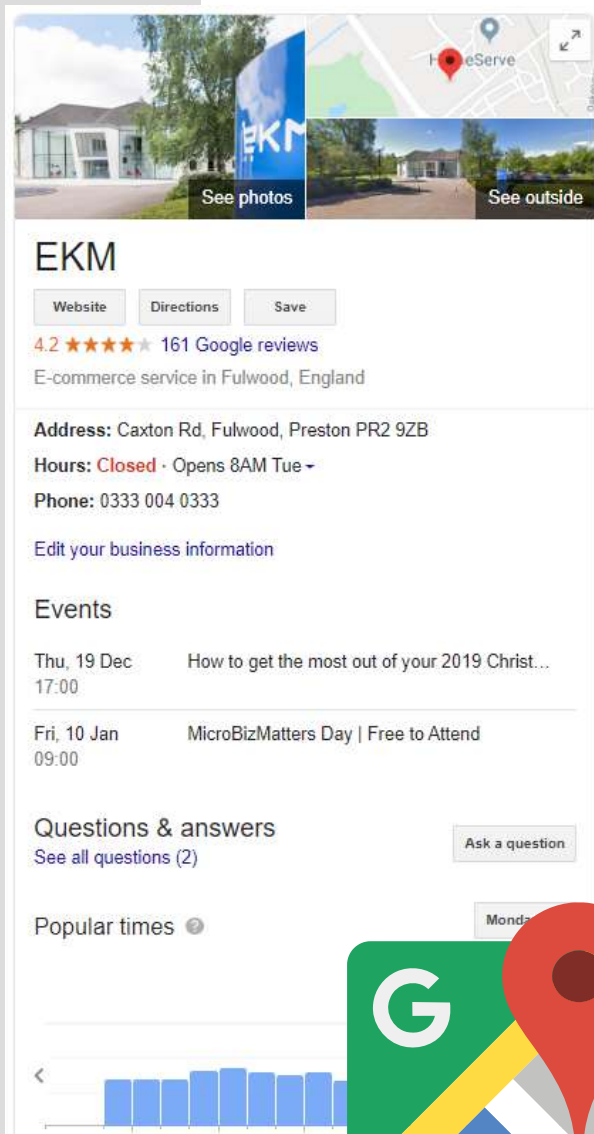
COMPETITOR ANALYSIS



One of the first points I mentioned at the start of this guide was about how if you want to be competitive in your field you need to have an SEO strategy in place. So, how do you go about getting ahead and staying ahead of your competition without being aware of what they're doing? Well, the simple answer is you can't and that's why competitor analysis is necessary for your long-term growth.

The first step of getting this right is by distinguishing between your real-world competitors and your search competitors. Although you may think these would be the same you can often find differences between the two. You'll find other businesses trying to rank for terms which aren't in their industry in order to generate more brand awareness and bring audiences from different industries to their site.

Once you've discovered who these search competitors are you need to be utilising the previous steps to gain an understanding of what they're doing well that you can improve on and do better as well as any opportunities they're not making the most of which you can employ to your website.



LOCAL SEO

Local SEO is another practice you want to be implementing, and is vital if you also have a brick and mortar store. This has been included as I often see a lot of people missing out on this step when considering SEO strategies as it's not heavily talked about. The inclusion of local SEO is very different in comparison to some of the other practices I have included as it's utilising the other practices just in a slightly different way.

There are multiple ways to turn SEO practices into a localised version. The main way to accomplish this is by using geo-targeted content and keywords when you have services that can be accompanied by this technique. An example of this would be to target the search term "Car parts in Preston" rather than the term "Car parts". First of all because the volume of the keyword would be much higher it would make it more difficult to rank, the quality of the long-tail keyword is much better and the customers and audience you would be bringing to your site would be much better, overall helping you to improve on some of the metrics mentioned in the previous section.

It's also important to make sure your Google My Business account is set up and maximised to its potential. I've mentioned some of the benefits of this tool previously but this can really help take your brands SERP listing to the next level.

SITE OPTIMISATION - SPEED, STRUCTURE, ON-PAGE SEO

Site optimisation is very broad so the sections below have been broken down into site speed, structure and on-page changes. Furthermore, to make this step even simpler there's a free on-page SEO checklist which you can refer back to when making any changes to make sure you have every basis covered.

SITE SPEED

If you've ever read anything on SEO in the past, you'll have heard the term "mobile first approach". So, what does it actually mean? Simply put, Google indexes content through this approach meaning it is more important now than ever before to have a well optimised mobile site if you want to be ranking for the search terms you're targeting. This doesn't simply mean having a responsive site and making sure all elements of your website are visible on mobile, but also making sure the mobile speed is up to scratch.

In 2013 Google introduced cross device conversions to be able to have a clearer understanding on total conversions and give users more of an insight into where traffic is coming from. This gave users the ability to see if users had continued their buying journey on your site from another device they may have logged into. For example, if a user started from clicking on an ad on their desktop but later returned on their mobile to complete the purchase you would now be able to see this. According to The ROBO Economy (Research Online Buy Offline), 82% of smartphone users turn to their mobile to influence a purchase decision while in a store, demonstrating just how important getting this step right is.

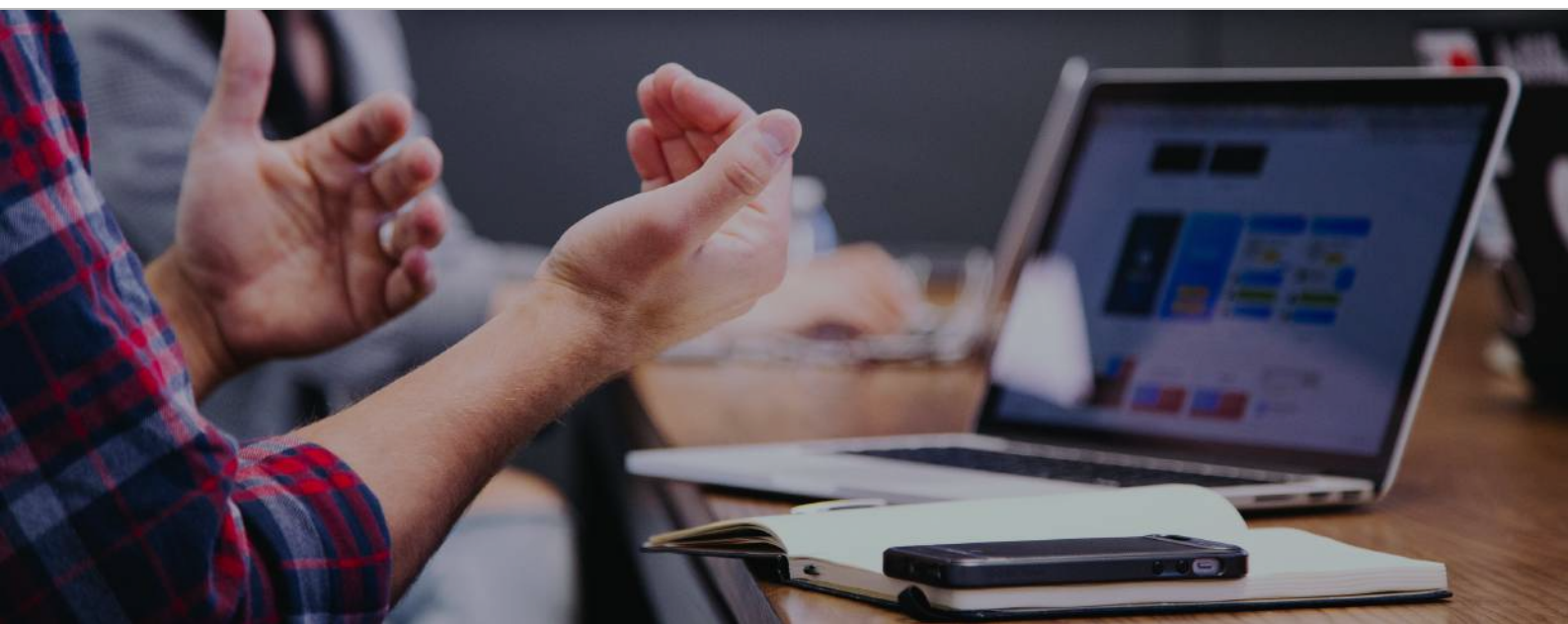
Now you might be thinking how can I optimise my site speed? Well the first and usually one of the most important steps to accomplishing this is by looking at the media you have included on your website, if you're heavily reliant on imagery, be sure to use formats like JPEGs or if your platform allows for it then using next gen formats like WebP or JPEG 2000. These will massively reduce the size of any images you have.

SITE OPTIMISATION - SPEED, STRUCTURE, ON-PAGE SEO

The other step you can take for this is to make sure your images are sized correctly, it's easy to get lazy and add the first large image you find, however taking the time to optimise it and making sure the resolution and size of the image is appropriate for its placement will go a long way in accomplishing this step. For example if you have a logo only displaying in the top right corner the image doesn't have to be 1000 x 1000 px, experiment and find the sweet spot where the image is clearly visible but not too large.

Another way to optimise your site speed and make sure any multimedia you're using isn't taking up too much time to load, is by using a method called lazy-load. This again will be dependent on whether or not your platform allows for this or not. Lazy-load is a method which essentially waits till a user gets to a section before loading in any media from it, and this again helps the load time. When looking at Google Pagespeed insights you'll see different sections to optimise, from first contentful paint, first meaningful paint, time to interactive and more. These are all different measurements that will differ depending on what you've optimised.

You will have to decide which aspect is most important to you, for example, if you're looking to optimise your website from a usability point of view, you want to make sure the time to interactive is as quick as possible. However, if you're simply looking to optimise for a better overall speed score, focussing your efforts on first contentful point which is where the first bit of text or image is displayed may be more beneficial.



SITE OPTIMISATION - SPEED, STRUCTURE, ON-PAGE SEO

SITE ARCHITECTURE

Throughout this guide you'll often find me mentioning usability and improving the user experience, this is because you must be aware of how search engines work. Their goal is to give users the best experience possible, from finding the most relevant content matching their search query to giving them the best experience possible on the website.

Having a good site structure is a pivotal part of producing a good user experience. Going back to the metrics mentioned earlier which you should be paying attention to, your bounce rate, pages/session and average session duration can all be improved by having a good site structure. However, the amount of benefits this can provide doesn't end there.

Adding features like search functionality to the site can not only help you get more sales, as you're making the journey of the user easier to find their desired product, service or even content. But, you get a much better understanding of your audience and their needs, for example, if they're looking for a product you don't currently offer you'll get an understanding of the demand your audience has for it and you can improve your services because of it.

A great example of this is an EKM shop by the name of Lords Sewing, who found out after implementing the search functionality that people coming to the site looking for "Bobbin Fill" were often using a different search term and were actually using the search functionality to look for "Bobbin Thread" having discovered this through the analytics feature within EKM, they were able to get this changed and provide a much better user experience for visitors to their site and increase sales of this product they had already previously provided under a different name.

The other step to ensure your site is as accessible as possible is by having a good site navigation structure in place. Making sure visitors are able to find everything they would possibly need access to make a purchase through the site navigation is a vital step to ensuring your users stick around on your website and find what they require.

THE IMPORTANCE OF CONTENT & ON-PAGE SEO FOR ECOMMERCE WEBSITES

“*Content is king*”

When it comes to SEO the phrase “content is king” is often thrown about, and although I hate how often I hear it there’s no denying the truth behind the statement. Often in ecommerce producing quality content is overlooked because it may not immediately correlate to a sale. This could be a disastrous outlook if you’re looking to grow your SEO efforts, producing content around terms you think your ideal audience would be interested in can only be beneficial, even if there’s no purchase at the end of the journey.

Getting your brand out there in front of more people who are interested in the topic you’re talking about could lead to sales down the line. It’s important to distinguish your content between, top of the funnel content and bottom of the funnel content. Top of the funnel content should ideally be reserved for people who are just looking to start out on their buying journey whereas bottom of the funnel content should target those who are coming to the stage of purchase, an example of this would be visitors looking for pricing comparisons.

The way you structure these pieces should all be differentiated with more call to actions in your bottom of the funnel content and more references to your products or services, whereas the top of the funnel should be reserved for making the customers aware of your brand and being more informative pieces rather than a sales pitch. Knowing the type of audience you’re writing for is only a part of getting this right. You’ll want to make sure thorough keyword research is carried out as well as making sure you’ve carried out and optimised your content from an on-page seo perspective. Go through the checklist below to ensure you’ve covered all basis when writing for your audience.

ON-PAGE SEO CHECKLIST

MAKE THE CONTENT ATTRACTIVE AND INTERESTING TO READ

- Approach your content and topics directly and set some objectives for the purpose of the content depending on your audience.
- Ensure “Instant Gratification”. Be sure to give your readers exactly what they came for as quickly as you can.
- Make sure the content is unique, fresh and up-to-date. Avoid any duplicate content and be sure to reference any text you need to copy, i.e. quotes.
- Check for grammar, punctuation and spelling errors.
- Long sentences are to be avoided Meta Title
- Does the title contain the keyword and does it read well?
- Is the length of the title correct (<65 characters)? Is it completely visible in the SERP?
- Does your title stick out enough from search competitors? (what will you be offering that’s unique?)

META DESCRIPTION

- Does the meta description contain the keyword?
- Is the length of the meta description correct? <155 characters
- Does it stand out enough from search competitors?

H1S/H2S

- Are the headers written correctly and without spelling errors?
- Are the correct keywords covered? (primary, secondary and LSI keywords)

ON-PAGE SEO CHECKLIST

KEYWORDS

- Have you researched the volume and keyword difficulty?
- Is the keyword coverage spread equally? For example, is the primary keyword used more often than the secondary keywords?
- Did you manage to integrate any long-tail keywords?
- Do the keywords serve the search intent and content you've written?
- Are the keywords integrated in a natural way?
- Are the keywords used correctly in the H1, first H2, title, meta description, alt-tags etc.?
- Have you avoided overusing keywords?

STATIC CONTENT

- Is the text easy to read and informative? Is this what a user might be looking for?
- Did you have all the important or interesting information covered? Have you done SERP analysis to see what everyone else is discussing and looking for?
- Is the text structured in a good way? Is the most valuable information at the top?
- Did you add any images, lists, graphs, etc to make the text easier to read (and to have the possibility to enter into a featured snippet)?

ON-PAGE SEO CHECKLIST

ON-PAGE ELEMENTS TO INSPECT

- Make sure the URLs are as small as possible and contain the target keyword of the page
- Use multimedia (images, infographics, and videos) in your pages
- Make sure the content is long-form in nature. A study by SEMRush found there is a 45% difference in content length between results in the Top-3 and 20th position.
- Pay attention to the Average Session Duration and Bounce Rate of your pages
- Make sure internal and external linking is present in your pages, and internal hierarchy is maintained
- Make sure that you pay close attention to the CTR rate for your pages and keywords through Google Search Console tool.
- Make sure that the website load time is as fast as possible

BACKLINK ACQUISITION STRATEGY

- Start slow, but focus on acquiring backlinks from high traffic sites in your niche.
- Ramp up your backlink building slowly and work on building an outreach list
- If you're finding it difficult to claim a backlink on a keyword try to claim it on your brand name on the basis of the source information provider. You can offer the information to the individual in your pitch, and only ask for Information credit, which could be an easier tactic
- Look to build relationships by asking marketers for their content calendar and then create content for them asking for a link back to your site keeping the above methods in mind.

CONCLUSION



This topic could go on forever, however, I think with the information provided, if you're able to make the most of it and keep on top of your strategy you will be successful in whatever your SEO objective is. Just be aware of why you're doing it and keep referring back to your objectives before implementing anything.

As mentioned at the start, SEO can be a very daunting task to overcome, however, if you're looking for long term growth from a marketing channel which has one of the best ROI it's definitely worth the time and effort you would invest in implementing your strategy.

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