Optimizing Content for SEO

Making Your Website Attractive to the Search Engines

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Search engines like Google, Bing, and Yahoo! help users find websites they're looking for by crawling the Internet. These search engines use special algorithms to determine the importance of a website and its relevancy to a user's query. The higher your website ranks in Google search results, the more visitors you'll get from that search engine.

Websites that rank well in search engines are called "optimized" websites. Optimization strategies for search engine crawlers involve techniques such as creating unique content, link building, image tagging, keyword research, and implementing site architecture principles to improve user experience (UX). As you already know, there are different ways to optimize your site for search engines.

Your Reason for Optimizing

First, you must determine why you're trying to optimize your site for search engines.

- Are you trying to increase your lead generation?
- Do you want more organic sales?
- Do you want to drive more traffic to your website?

If your sole purpose in optimizing your site for search engines is to increase your revenue, you're going about it all wrong.

When optimizing for revenue, you need to focus on driving traffic to your website. You need to consider how you can optimize for better conversions. You should also pay attention to your competitor's websites and find out what they're doing to get a leg up on you.

Once you have an understanding of what your competitors are up to, you can use that information to your advantage. You should also pay attention to the search terms people are using to find your business. With that information, you can create a better optimization plan for your own website.

Keywords are Still Important

Keywords are words or phrases that people use to search for goods and services online. SEO experts understand the importance of keywords, and that they're the backbone of any SEO strategy. If you want to optimize your website, you must understand your target audience and their needs.

Part of getting to know your target audience includes learning which keywords your audience types into search engines to find goods and services related to your business. We won't be going into researching your target audience in this guide. However, once you've done that, each time you content for your website, make sure you use these keywords where possible to help search engines understand the topic of your pages. You can also create an SEO strategy that includes keyword research.

Be sure to add keywords on your site, strategically, in key places. Add them to your page titles describing the subject. Place keywords in your

meta description that shows up under your title in search results. Another great place for keywords is in your subheadings as well as throughout your content. Add keywords to image titles and alt text as well.

Use your main keyword in the first couple of sentences then use the keyword or a variation of the keyword in the rest of the content.

It's About User Experience

Search engine optimization is an ongoing process that requires you to consistently monitor your website's performance, analyze your competitors' strategies, and adapt, as necessary. It also requires you to make sure your website visitors have a pleasant user experience.

Google and other search engines like to rank pages that provide visitors with a positive experience. Here are some ways you can do this:

Security

Https security is necessary. Visitors are leery of sharing their personal data on sites that aren't secure, making it more susceptible to hackers. Some search engines will flag or even block pages if they are not secure. Always encrypt your website with SSL/TLS security.

Design

Choose a pleasing design for your site. Your site should be kept current. No one like visiting a website that looks like it was created in the late ninety's or early 2000's. You don't necessarily need to change the design every few months, but it should look up to date and reflect positively for your brand.

Easy to Read Content

Your content needs to be super easy to consume for the reader. If you're content isn't easy for visitors to read and to understand, then it won't rank. This is because Google uses "User Experience Signals" to figure out which results should rank in the SERPs.

Navigation

Simple, easy to follow navigation and links help with the user experience and the search engines. Search engines crawl sites like people do. They follow the links to find other content to analyze. They can't see images so setting your navigation and links as text-only is important for them to see.

Also use a simple URL structure whenever possible. Search engines aren't fond of lengthy strings of words or complex structure. That means short URLs with little beyond the main keyword or phrase you're optimizing the page for.

Mobile Friendly is a Must

More people are using their mobile devices to search. If you're website doesn't load correctly or look pleasant on small devices, it won't rank well.

This is called Mobile First Indexing (MFI). MFI means Google uses the mobile version of content for indexing and ranking your site. Mobile optimized isn't just being mobile-friendly though.

Mobile-optimized websites include several factors.

A theme or template that allows content to resize automatically for multiple screen sizes, resolutions, and orientations. This provides the visitors with the same browsing experience they would have when using their desktop.

Proper formatting of content. If your pages are content heavy, it makes it difficult for readers to wade through on a small screen. Yes, you want quality long posts, but the format needs to be optimized for easy reading.

Proper formatting could include optimizing paragraphs with shorter sentence lengths for mobile users. Using images or videos that are adjusted for smaller screens – or that adjust automatically. It also includes using readable font sizes.

User experience is one of the most important aspects of optimizing your site for the search engines. Users want fast, easy to navigate and secure sites they are visiting.

Fast Load Speeds Aren't an Option

Page loading speed is a factor in ranking for both desktop and mobile. Search engines use the time it takes for a user to be able to read a page as an indication of the quality of the site. They consider the overall performance of a page when deciding whether to promote it in the SERPs.

Ever visited a website where it seem to take forever for the information and images to load? It's frustrating, right? How often have you clicked away from a site because of slow load speeds? This is why fast load speeds are so important.

Load time is affected by many elements on your website: image size, videos, etc. You can use a tool such as Google's [Page Speed Insights Tool](#) [PSI] for suggestions on what you can do to improve your site pages.

The Page Speed Insights tool is a free performance tool used to analyze the content on a specific webpage while giving a page speed score for both mobile and desktop version of that page.

Page speed is essential for SEO as well as for the overall user experience. On mobile devices how fast a page loads is considered the most important factor for many searchers. The best page load speed is less than one second. A delay of 3 seconds or more increases the likelihood of visitor to bounce.

What can you do to improve the speed and load times of most of your webpages? Here are six options.

1. Create visual stability and optimize your images and videos. They are the most likely to cause issues with slower speed and load times. Optimize them by...

   • Resizing and compressing images

   • Setting a specific height and width for each image

   • Using a content delivery network to deliver your images.

2. Embed videos instead of uploading them. Videos take up a lot of space and place stress on your web server when many users are playing the videos at the same time. The best option is to store your videos on YouTube or somewhere else. Then embed the video content on your web page.

3. Stay away from too many redirects. Redirects increase the time between the request to the server and when the data is sent back to the searcher. By avoiding these as much as possible, you will improve page speed. And it's good for increasing your SEO overall.

4. Opt for a faster website theme. Many are optimized specifically for speed. These themes can significantly improve your load times.

5. Use asynchronous loading. Asynchronous loading helps your web browser accomplish other actions while a JavaScript file loads. This is best done with the advice of a web developer.

6. Enable browser caching to help your webpages load faster for returning visitors. Images and videos are stored on the user's device and then loaded from there each time they visit the page. This is another process best implemented by a web developer.

Fast page load speeds is important to both search engine optimization and for the user experience. Especially helpful for mobile searchers, fast load times help users conserve the data required for website loading.

Content is still Important

Content is important for both search engines and user experience. In the past you could throw any kind of post or content on your website as long as it was packed with keywords. But no longer. People and the search engines are more discriminating these days. Providing the right type of content is key to optimizing your site.

Interactive Features

One way to create optimized content is to provide interactive features on your website. Instead of a website that simply provides information with basic "click" or "learn more" links, an interactive website encourages

readers to communicate and engage through the use of interactive features.

These interactive websites are more engaging and interesting to your audience, encouraging visitors to stay longer and connect more.

Interactive elements might include:

- Virtual reality overlays
- Animations
- Quizzes
- Maps
- Surveys
- Calculators
- Polls
- Interactive eBooks
- Assessments
- Interactive infographics
- Webinars
- Classes

Complex Answers to Simple Questions (MUM)

Google MUM is a search technology created for answering complex search queries. MUM (Multitask Unified Model) brings the hope of giving your readers an improved and simplified search experience.

On average, according to Google, people use up to eight queries to answer complex questions or tasks. MUM is set up to simplify this experience allowing people a deeper and more comprehensive answer the first time. MUM's ability to multitask or read multiple forms of media to communicate specific messages is good news for website owners who are already using various media types to communicate with their customers.

SEO under MUM relies on high-quality, focused content, including relevant content provided through articles and blog posts.

To optimize for MUM focus on:

Creating content that meets the queries people ask Google to answer. Go through your content and find information gaps, or where you need to strengthen your content. Where can you add more, deeper answers to your content? You want to become a comprehensive information source for your target market.

Use keywords naturally throughout your content. Create content that delivers relevancy, substance and shows your expertise on the subject. Your chosen keywords will flow naturally in the content if you are choosing the right ones.

Create topic clusters and hubs that create central resources for your specialized content areas. For example, a content hub featuring a complete

guide to your niche as a one-stop comprehensive information resource for Google and readers.

Make sure your website is easy for Google to find, crawl, index, understand and rank your website. Using effective technical SEO factors including accessibility, crawlability, an XML sitemap, site speed, site security and mobile friendliness.

Long-form Content

Long form content for blog posts, articles, etc. is content that is 1,000+ words. Long-form content ranks better in SEO and as a part of the user experience.

Longer content gives Google more information about the topic of the webpage. This shows them your page is relevant for the keyword.

Long-form content covers a lot more than a typical 300–500-word blog post on the same topic. This in turn provides answers to searchers' queries better than short content will. Longer content also attracts more links and social shares than other shorter content does.

But you don't want to just create long content just for the sake of having more words. It needs to be quality and relevant to the searchers' question. In other words, write comprehensive content that gives the searcher everything they need to answer their questions.

Types of long-form content include:

- Long-form blog posts
- Case Studies
- Pillar Posts
- Whitepapers
- Evergreen pages and posts
- E-books
- Tutorials and guides
- Essays and articles

Aside from SEO purposes, long form content has other benefits, including:

- Keeps readers on the page longer
- Builds authority in your industry; contributes to audience trust
- More areas to include your CTA's
- More chances for linking to other pages
- Opportunity for more comments and conversations about the content

Content that is Extremely Helpful

When optimizing your site, you want to be creating content that is extremely helpful. In fact, all unhelpful content should be removed from the site since it doesn't have a purpose.

You should always be producing content that's engaging, well-written and informative. It should be relevant to your niche, topic, and goals.

Google's Helpful Content update focuses on people-first content. This means you should be creating satisfying and helpful content for your target audience first, then utilizing SEO rules.

Use the following questions to make sure you're on the right track to creating helpful content for people first.

1. Who is your existing or intended audience that will find the content on your website useful?

2. Does your site have a specific focus or purpose?

3. Are you creating content that clearly demonstrates your expertise and depth of knowledge. Have you actually used the product or service, visited the place, etc.?

4. Will someone reading your content leave knowing they've learned enough about the topic to answer their questions and reach their goal?

5. Do your readers leave feeling like they had a fulfilling experience?

If you aren't sure whether you are creating for people or search engines, here are some more questions you should be asking.

1. Is your content created to attract people from search engines instead of created with humans in mind?

2. Are you creating lots of content on different topics hoping some of it will rank well in the search engines?

3. Are you using automation extensively to product content on many different topics?

4. Is your content a summarization of other people's content?

5. Does you content send readers back to the search engines to get more information?

6. Are you simply writing about trending topics, not because you'd already be writing about them for your audience?

7. Are you creating content that meets a particular word count only?

8. Did you enter a specific niche topic without real expertise only because you thought you'd get the traffic?

If your answers are yes to some or all, you need to reevaluate how and what you are creating.

When creating helpful content, choose topics that you have knowledge of and that you can teach or share with your readers. Consider questions people may have, from the complete beginner to a more experienced person. The more quality information you can provide that answers their questions and leaves them feeling satisfied with what they know, the better you will rank in the search engines.

Video Sales Pages

Videos sales pages have been around for a while. You've probably viewed at least one during your own searches. Some video sales pages are slow to load or haven't been properly optimized for search engines. Many others load and play quickly. These fast-loading ones, especially if they provide relevant content, are more apt to be found within the search engine results.

Videos is one of the most effective ways to boost engagement and conversion rates when done right. The problem with videos as far as search engine crawlers are concerned, is the crawlers need help understanding the content within the video files.

This is where optimization rules will help. These rules include the following:

- Keep your video as small as possible if it's built directly into your site. This is important for fast load time. You want to minimize buffering time. And you want to help mobile users reduce the amount of data they use to view your site. Compress videos built directly into your site and avoid background videos on an endless loop.

- Allow your visitors to decide if they want the video to play. Make sure they have a pause button if they are on auto-play.

- Determine where the video should be placed on the page as this will impact the video SEO and the user experience. If the video is the primary form of content on your sales page, it should be near the top

of the page. If the video is complementary or secondary information, place it towards the middle of the page.

- Create a brief summary of what the video contains. This can be helpful for SEO especially if you use relevant keywords. A brief summary also helps those who aren't able to listen to the video for some reason.

- Caption your video to provide the search engines more context about the video content.

- Add video chapters, or sections, to your video content. The viewer sees these chapters displayed along the video progress bar. They can then quickly jump to the content they want to see. You can add specific keywords or titles to each chapter.

- Add metatags to your video sales pages to allow the search engine crawlers to index the information.

Content is still especially important when optimizing your site for the search engines.

The type and ways it is presented is different than it was just a few years ago. Long form content that is relevant and helpful is key. Videos can now be found easier with the right SEO tactics. And interactive features provide a satisfying user experience.

Templates and Tools

We've included the templates and tools you need to guide your through the maze of optimizing your site for the search engines. Included are:

1. **Optimization Tools List** gives you the places to test and analyze your website, content, and videos.

2. **Search Engine Optimization Worksheet** can be used to determine where and what you need to change or add to get seen in the SERPs.

3. **Search Engine Optimization Template** goes along with the worksheet to guide you as you make changes.

4. **Long Form Content Template** gives you a starting point for creating compelling, helpful, relevant content.

5. **Creating Content for Optimization Checklist** keeps you on track as you create content for your optimizing your site.

What to do Next

Optimizing your site for search engines isn't about writing a few keyword-stuffed sentences and hoping for the best. It's about creating unique and valuable content that engages your readers and ranks well in search engine results pages (SERPs).

To achieve this, you need to understand your target audience and what they are searching for online. Once you know what your audience wants and the keywords they are using, you can incorporate those words into your content. When creating your content ask yourself how you can create a complete answer to their query using long form content.

Make sure your site is optimized for user-friendly and mobile-friendly use. You want your visitors to be able to quickly load your pages and easily navigate around your site. You also want them to trust your site's security.

As the search engines change the way they rank, it's important you ensure your site is following along, provides relevant content for the topic or keyword and is easy to use.

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