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How to improve your website's search engine optimization

A comprehensive guide from TBH Creative

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Search is everywhere. Voice searches and mobile searches are continuing to grow every day. You must employ SEO best practices to reach your website marketing goals. This introductory guide covers everything you need to know for SEO success, from keyword research to featured snippets.

How can you improve SEO fast?

SEO is a long-term effort, but some of the fastest ways to improve SEO on your website include:

- Create content that answers questions for your users.

- Optimize title tags with search terms.

- Create relevant META data for all pages.

- Improve content with fresh copy written toward keyword targets.

- Include relevant keyword ALT tags on images.

- Interlink and cluster your content between pages.

- Improve your site to be mobile-responsive.

- Boost website load speed.

- Focus on search terms with less competition.

- Check and consolidate your root domains.

Why SEO matters

Learn some of the reasons working on search engine optimization is crucial for website success.

Most of your new customers are going to use Google to find you. That's why it's crucial that you're at the top of search engine results pages for the right keywords.

Today, Google processes around 100 billion searches monthly. On average, the search engine handles **94%** of all total organic web traffic, and **96%** of that traffic will click on one of the top four search results.

You aren't the only one who wants to rank number one for searches for your business or service. Your competitors vying for those top spots, too.

To bring organic traffic to your website, you have to work harder, faster, and continually to see results.

SEO baselines

Develop a strategy and establish baselines to start accurately measuring results from your website.

Before you build a plan for your redesigned website, you have to start with an assessment of where you are now. If you're unsure where to begin, answer these questions to figure out where there's room for improvement:

1. **How are you ranking now?**

2. **Is your website content optimized for search?**

3. **How fast does your site load in mobile?**

How do you rank now?

It's not enough to set keywords and forget about them. Monitor your rank position to identify opportunities for growth and ensure that high ranking terms keep their position. Knowing your starting point helps you to track your improvement so you can weigh the value of the different SEO strategies. Here are some other considerations to keep in mind:

Alogrithm adjustments have changed the presentation of Google's search results pages—pushing organic results further down the page. Google's new search results layout gives you more opportunities, but content on your old static web pages may appear to be lower.

Featured snippets answer questions up front, reducing overall click-throughs, even with strong rankings.

Is your website content optimized for search?

SEO is still content-driven. In fact, algorithm updates continue to push toward customer-focused content, making carefully optimized copy more important than ever.

- **2.8%** of click-throughs come from ads, but **62.2%** of clicks come from unique, relevant SEO content.

- **1 in 5** search queries come from voice search, and **43%** of voice search answers come from SEO-driven content.

How fast does your site load in mobile?

SEO has gone mobile. In 2018, Google started using mobile page load speed as a factor in search result ranking so you can't afford to ignore responsive design.

- **58%** of of general searches are done on mobile devices.

- **68%** of healthcare searches are done on mobile devices.

Now that you know where you're starting from, you can build a plan to improve your SEO.

WEBSITE AUDIT RESOURCES

Discover how to complete a content audit

https://tbhcreative.com/how-to-complete-a-site-audit

Learn what goes into mobile-first indexing

https://tbhcreative.com/mobile-first-indexing

Figure out how to measure your website's mobile load time

https://search.google.com/test/mobile-friendly

SEO TOOLS

Moz Pro Rank Tracker

https://moz.com/tools/rank-tracker

Ahrefs

https://ahrefs.com

SEMrush

https://www.semrush.com

Screaming Frog's SEO Spider

https://www.screamingfrog.co.uk/seo-spider

Technical SEO

Fixing your technical SEO and building a strong foundation.

If you start strong, it won't take long to cover technical SEO basics. Schedule a regular time to review and evaluate:

Title tags and meta descriptions: These influence what search terms you'll rank for and also the text that appears with your result, so be sure your copy works for search engines and the users you want to click through to your site.

Duplicate content: Search out places where you might have cut and pasted content on multiple pages. Make sure your content is relevant. Instead of pasting the same content, reword it, or link to the original location.

Header tags: Show search engines how your info is organized by using hierarchical header tags. Using different tags shows search engines what is most important, and what questions your page is answering.

Speed up your website load time

Ever since the July 2018 algorithm update, we've noticed Google ranking sites differently based on mobile load speed. It makes sense. Your company's customers don't want to use slow sites either.

Here are some relevant stats:

- **53%** of mobile users leave a page that takes more than three seconds to load.

- **70%** of mobile pages take more than seven seconds to load.

- Faster loading sites capture more mobile traffic.

Make your site responsive

Mobile–first indexing affects your page rank. To optimize for it, be sure you have the same data on all site versions.

Plan thoughtfully to ensure your content is structured for mobile readers as well as desktop and laptop users. And, don't forget to check your mobile site for overall user experience. Is it easy to navigate and find information?

Responsive coding isn't new, but if your website is more than a few years old it may not have been coded for smaller devices—or with the features that Google wants to see for search rank position.

Here are some ways you can improve and assess your website's mobile performance:

- Test your site for mobile speed.

- Run through your website manually on your mobile device to be sure content flows and that it's easy to navigate between pages.

- Check that all buttons on your site are easy to click in mobile.

- Be sure that any forms you use on your site can be easily filled out in mobile.

If you find any issues with how your site looks or operates on mobile devices, make a note and take a screenshot, then talk to your web developer to get those issues corrected.

Secure your site

Mobile–first indexing affects your page rank. To optimize for it, be sure you have the same data on all site versions.

Plan thoughtfully to ensure your content is structured for mobile readers as well as desktop and laptop users. And, don't forget to check your mobile site for overall user experience. Is it easy to navigate and find information?

- In July 2018, Chrome began showing a red "not secure" warning for any site that lacked SSL, the HTTPS license. This action, while not directly tied to search ranking, is an active deterrent to site visitors.

- Google gives a minor rankings boost to HTTPS sites over HTTP sites with similar technical and content quality.

- Search algorithms change frequently. While HTTPS impact on search ranking is currently minor, that could easily change in the future. The current trends, combined with Chrome's negative visual signaling as a deterrent to click–throughs and conversions, make HTTPS a must–do for SEO results.

What is SEO copywriting?

SEO copywriting is when your content is organized and written to attract visitors looking for particular information. SEO copywriting uses keywords and research to create content that connects online searchers with relevant answers to their questions.

TECHNICAL SEO RESOURCES

Get pro tips for improving your metadata
https://tbhcreative.com/improving-metadata

How you can design a faster, performance-focused website
https://tbhcreative.com/design-a-faster-site

Learn 10 ways to make your website performance better
https://tbhcreative.com/improve-performance

SEO opportunities

Take advantage of new opportunities, search algorithms.

Search algorithms and SEO trends are constantly evolving. Take these shifts as your opportunity to try new tactics to improve your SEO.

When added to your long–term strategy, these opportunities can help you boost your search engine rankings throughout the new year including:

- Format copy for potential featured snippet promotion.

- Incorporate shemas into your code.

- Look at your data.

- Consider accelerated mobile pages.

- Don't forget voice search.

- Integrate social media strategically.

- Reorganize content into pillar pages.

Format your copy for potential featured snippet promotion

You've probably noticed that the new Google search results pages often start with a large text block answering the question Google thinks you're asking. Google uses those text blocks—called "featured snippets"—to answer 43% of voice queries, too.

How can you be the website that Google uses for a featured snippet? Start with your page template, and be sure you've designed a section toward the top of the page where you can ask a broad question and provide a short, descriptive answer.

Featured snippet basics: Pick a few pages to target for featured snippets, and adjust your content accordingly. Use the SEM Rush Keyword Magic tool to help. Start with search terms where you already rank well. With 94% of featured snippets pulled from first page results, you need to already be in top 10 organic results to win the place.

Answer the questions people are asking. Tying your content to questions—and framing the answer with formatting designed to catch search engine attention—can help you get the snippet, and also helps the search engines categorize your content.

Incorporate schemas into your code

If your website uses data—for example, rankings, ratings, or categories—structuring that data within the website's code can help search engines better understand your content. These code structures, called schemas, can help you highlight details for search results, put your information in a particular industry context, or add clues that help search engines to categorize your information. And the more easily search engines can categorize your information, the better you'll rank in search results.

Schemas are recognized by Google, Bing, and Yahoo! SEMrush says, "As Google continues to build a more semantic web, these markups become increasingly valuable in effective Internet communication."

Look at your data

Think about how data can help you characterize information, and talk to your web developer to implement any relevant schemas. What properties or data can you highlight to make it easier to find, or set it in the right context? Start by considering:

- Creative work and publications: Is this publication for a particular industry audience? Does it have an ISBN number? Do you list the author's name?

- Events: What type of event is it? Who is the audience?

- Organizations: What industry are you in? Which industry sub-categories fit?

- People: Which industries, organizations, titles, rankings or other data may apply?

- Places: Which addresses, functions, ratings, or people are associated?

- Products: Are there any ratings, categories, or other data to tie in?

Consider accelerated mobile pages

Because people consume information differently on desktop computers versus mobile devices, you may consider creating mobile-friendly versions of key pages. These super-fast mobile pages, called Accelerated Mobile Pages (AMP), get a "fast" designation on search engine results pages and are often ranked more highly. Since 2018, Google has publicly backed the practice—making it a great tactic for SEO when you focus on pages and keywords used heavily by your mobile audience.

Accelerated mobile pages are particularly good for news sites, blogs, or content-rich pages. Take a look at some pages of other website who use AMPs so that you understand what they look like. Work with your web developer to evaluate if AMPs are right for your website. Use Google's Structured Data Markup Helper to get started.

Reorganize your content into pillar pages

Algorithm changes weight clusters of content with greater authority than pages optimized for single terms. Using your content audit, think of ways to reorganize your content into several "pillar pages." Pillar pages should cover one big idea, with links to related posts on your blog that use long-tail keywords.

Content reorganization next steps:

- Use questions from users to create a content strategy.

- Write new original content (and update old content) regularly.

- Attract customers with pillar pages.
  https://tbhcreative.com/pillar-page-content

Don't forget voice search

Mobile phone voice assistants and smart home technology continue to widen the opportunity to capture voice search.

This fast, hands-free search option delivers quick results—and they're increasingly accurate.

- Because three of the top four voice assistant technologies use it to power their searches, Bing currently reigns supreme in voice search—a fact you may want to consider when it comes to paid ads.

- Voice searches use natural language, so they return results on longer, question-based terms rather than the short terms used in text searches.

- People often use voice queries to ask about local businesses, and priority results go to businesses with easy-to-find contact information for users.

Take steps to capture growing number of voice searches:

- Check your analytics to see if people are using question-based queries to find you.

- Add a question and answer section to your site to answer a few long-tail keywords.

- Make sure your business information is updated, especially in your Bing Places for Business listing.

- Optimize your content for voice search.

Integrate social media strategically

Recent algorithm changes have shifted how we understand social media influence on SEO. Old tactics may no longer serve you as well as they did before.

You'll need to be more strategic in the ways you integrate your social media into your overall SEO plan.

While Google has signaled that social media isn't part of its ranking decisions anymore, Bing—the second most used search engine and the leader in voice searches—has made no such claims.

Whether or not the search engines directly use your social stats to determine your place in search returns, you can still use social media channels to influence the factors that do play a central role in your search results.

- Use social to get links. When you post great content, your followers link and share it— and links are one of the top SEO ranking factors.

- Use social to build brand recognition. When people know your brand, they're more likely to click through when you show up in search results—and click-throughs influence your place in future results for similar searches.

- Use social as a search engine in itself. People frequently use social media platforms to search for answers and information. When you structure your social posts as potential search results, you'll likely see better engagement and conversions.

As in all content—online and off—quality matters. Don't think of social media as a volume game. Your followers won't click through or share information that isn't relevant and helpful, so invest in high quality, search-focused content in your postings.

Social media integration tips: Don't think of social media as a volume game. Your followers won't click through or share information that isn't relevant and helpful, so invest in high quality, search-focused content in your postings.

Link building

Learn how to create a modern link-building strategy.

Topically relevant, SEO-focused content is a start. But, how do you get noticed when your website is one small spot in an ever-widening universe of online information? When it comes to building online authority, the signals and referrals of other sources are critical. More than ever, you need other sites linking back to yours.

Local listings

Depending on your business, local listings may be great ways for people to find out about your services. A link back from an indexed business list not only drives traffic to your site but also indicates your authority to search engines.

Ask for links

If a quick search shows other sites talking about your brand without linking back, it doesn't hurt to ask them to add one. Likewise, if you already have a relationship with other brands, sites, or online reviewers, you can ask them to link to your site when it might be relevant.

Fix broken links

Here's an easy win: if another site is linking to a page you no longer have, and your site returns a 404 for that link, set up a 301 redirect to send the link to new content.

Use anchor text

When you're linking out to another site, or within your own pages, consider using a keyword for the highlighted, "anchor" text. For example, if you're trying to rank for the term "SEO Basics" you could use that text to link back to this post as a helpful reference.

Link building next steps should include:

- Update your information in local listings, and search out additional places to add your business information.

- Do a search on your name to make sure others are linking back.

- Consider creative ways to get a linked review or mention.

- Audit your site for broken links and fix them.

- Add SEO terms to anchor text on your site where it makes sense.

- Use our Google My Business checklist to optimize your profile.
  https://tbhcreative.com/gmb-checklist

Start getting your website in shape

You owe yourself an honest look in the mirror: Does your site deserve to rank well based on the work you've put in? At the end of the day, you determine how fit your website will be. Website rank is a promise, and your site needs to deliver.

- Are you taking the time and putting in the effort to create rankworthy content?

- Are you thinking about your audience, and working toward making your content relevant, clickable, and link-worthy?

- Are you doing the heavy lifting with technical fixes?

Wherever you are currently, you can take action to see real results over the coming year. As with any type of fitness, SEO is not a quick-win tactic or one-time service. It's a commitment, but the results are well worth it in the long run.

tbh creative is a full-service agency specializing in **web design**, **marketing**, **branding**, and **advertising** solutions.

Are you connecting with right people, with the right message, at the right time, via the right channel? "Gut feelings" and generic work aren't enough to drive results. Real success requires curiosity and a customized plan of action.

That's why, since 2004, our team has started each new project by listening, asking questions, and doing our homework. We transform all of that research into insights then blend those findings with business objectives, fresh ideas, and the latest technologies to create results-driven solutions our clients and their customers love.

The competition is too fierce to settle for investments without payoffs. It's time to expect more from your partner. How can TBH Creative help you get ahead?

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