WINNING THE
SEO
GAME

Why SEO Matters More Than Ever

- **If you want to get traffic to your website, it's important to understand Search Engine Optimization (SEO).** Up until about 2015, if you created a blog post with an interesting title and an eye-grabbing picture, you could bet that a lot of people would click on it when they saw it on Facebook.

- **Since then, however, things have changed dramatically.** Facebook realized that they were basically giving free publicity to businesses. So, Facebook started making it much more difficult for businesses to grab people's attention. If a business wanted to get a lot of exposure, they would have to pay for it.

- **The end result of all this is that it's now super tough to get as much traffic from social media.** You either need to have a massive following or be willing to shell out a fair amount of cash.

- **This is why SEO matters so much.** SEO is the process of optimizing your website (pages, blog posts, and more) for search engines like Google. If you understand it and do it right, you can get a significant amount of traffic from search engines.

- **The general concept behind SEO is simple, but it's a little more complicated in practice.** There are trillions of web pages and Google has to be able to understand them and give the relevant ones to searchers. One of the primary goals of SEO is to make your website stand out from everything else.

- **So, how do you make your site stand out in the eyes of Google? That's what this eBook is all about.** We're going to give you practical, proven SEO strategies that will increase your Google rankings.

How Does Google Work?

- **To understand SEO, it's important to have an understanding of how Google works.** At the core, Google exists to return the right information to searchers. We trust that, most of the time, it will return information relevant to our searches.

- **In order to make users happy, Google is always trying to find the best, most relevant information for a given search.** But how does it determine which web pages are the best and most relevant?

- **The Google algorithm uses over 200 different factors when evaluating pages.** These factors help Google determine which pages to return in search results. You enter a search term and Google evaluates millions of pages by their ranking factors to find the results that best match your search.

- **As you would expect, not all the ranking factors are equal.** Google hasn't made it 100% clear which ones are the most important, but there seems to be a fair amount of agreement around a few:

  - Search intent
  - Backlinks
  - Page speed
  - User experience
  - Content freshness, depth, and accuracy
  - Site authority
  - Security
  - Mobile friendliness
  - Structured data
  - Optimized for voice search

- **We'll go into much greater detail about each of these factors.** If you want to succeed with SEO, focus on the factors listed above. We'll explore each of the factors and what they mean for your website in particular.

SEO Factor #1: Search Intent

- **Behind every search there is intent.** In other words, when you type a search into Google, you're looking for something specific. Google always seeks to return results that most closely match what you're looking for. Pages that closely match the search intent will rank much higher than those that don't.

- **If you want to get search traffic to your website, you must optimize your pages for search intent.** In other words, you want them to contain the information that people are searching for. So how do you optimize your pages for search intent?

- **Keyword research is the process of finding relevant keywords and phrases that have a high monthly search volume and then including those words and phrases throughout a page.** When you include relevant keywords in your content, it helps Google understand the content more effectively.

- **There are a number of tools that can help you find relevant, high-volume keywords and phrases:**

    - Ubersuggest
    - Ahrefs
    - SEMRush
    - Long Tail Pro

- **There are several relatively simple ways you can find the best keywords for your page.** First, you can directly enter words and phrases to see what the monthly search volume is. Your goal is to find keywords that have a relatively high search volume and relatively low levels of competition.

- **Another way to find relevant keywords is to look at your competitors to see what terms they are already ranking for.** Seeing the terms your competitors rank for can help you determine the keywords you want to go after. Again, look for relatively high-volume, low-competition keywords.

- **Once you've identified a number of relevant keywords and phrases, sprinkle them appropriately and naturally throughout your page.** Try to include your primary keyword:

  - In the page title
  - Within the first 100 words
  - In a subheading
  - Naturally sprinkled throughout the body

SEO Factor #2: Backlinks

- **When a website links to your website, that is a backlink.** Generally speaking, the more backlinks a page has, the more authoritative and trustworthy it is. Authoritative pages are shown higher in search results.

- **When Google sees that a page has a lot of backlinks, it's a signal to them that a lot of people value the page and that the content on it is good.** Pages with lots of backlinks tend to show up much higher in search results because they are more authoritative and trustworthy in the eyes of Google.

- **The implication of all this is that if you want your pages to rank in search results, you'll want to get backlinks to those pages.** So how do you do that?

- **The starting place for getting backlinks is creating outstanding content on your website.** Give others a good reason to link to your pages. Create valuable content that people actually want to link to.

- **What makes content valuable?** Great content always checks at least one of the following boxes:

  - It covers a subject more thoroughly than other pieces.
  - It's authoritative (facts, studies).
  - It's easy to consume (easy to read, well-designed).
  - It's up to date.

- **At its core, link building is all about finding strategic ways to promote your content.** After all, if you want others to link to your content, they need to see it first. There are a number of effective ways to do promotion:

  - Outreach
  - Guest post
  - Appear on podcasts
  - Find broken links
  - Find resource pages

- **Ultimately, almost link building tactics boil down to the same thing: adding value to others.** The more value you can add, whether by creating great content, guest posting, or finding broken links, the more likely people are to link back to your site.

SEO Factor #3: Page Speed

- **Page speed is how fast a page loads in the browser.** These days, page speed increasingly matters to Google. If they send searchers to a page that takes a long time to load, those searchers won't be happy. In light of this, they tend to favor faster pages over slower ones in the search results.

- **To get a sense of how your site performs in the speed category, use the free Google tool [Test My Site](#).** It will analyze your site, tell you how it is performing, and give you specific recommendations for speeding up your website.

- **In addition to the suggestions made by Test My Site, there are a number of relatively simple things you can do to speed up your web pages:**

  - **Compress images**. Large images on web pages dramatically increase the time it takes them to load. A very simple way to increase your page speed is to automatically compress all your images.

- ○ **Implement browser caching.** Browser caching saves certain elements of your site, like headers and footers, within visitors' browsers so that they don't have to reload every time they visit your site. This can increase your site speed quite a bit.

- ○ **Minify HTML.** When a person visits your site, the HTML code must be loaded into and interpreted by their browser. Decreasing the amount of HTML that must be loaded increases page speed.

- ○ **Remove unnecessary plugins and scripts.** Each time your site loads, the plugins and scripts also must load. A simple way to speed up your website is to remove any unnecessary plugins and scripts.

- ○ **Use a content delivery network (CDN).** A Content Delivery Network (CDN) puts the files to your website on a large number of servers around the world. The physical proximity of the servers increases the speed at which your pages load.

SEO Factor #4: User Experience

- **In recent years, Google has started using a machine learning algorithm called RankBrain to determine whether users are satisfied with search results.** RankBrain looks at User Experience Signals to determine whether a particular page is satisfying users.

- **If Google sees people interacting with your site in a positive way, your pages will rank higher in the search results, and you'll get more search traffic.** How does Google know if people are having a positive experience with your site? It looks at a number of different things:

- **Click Through Rate (CTR).** CTR is the percentage of people who see your site in the search results and click through to your site. If a page has a high CTR, it's a signal to Google that the page is important and should be high in the search results. To optimize for CTR:

- ○ **Start by optimizing your page title.** It should be attention-grabbing so that it stands out in the search results.

- ○ **Optimize your page description, which is the text that shows up under the title.** Like your title, it needs to be both clear and compelling.

- ○ **Optimize the URL of your page**. The best way to do this is to make the URL short and include the primary keyword in it.

- **Dwell Time.** Dwell time is how long someone stays on your site after clicking on the search result. If they stay for a long time, it's a sign to Google that the content on the page is valuable and should be placed higher in the search results. To increase dwell time on your pages:

  - ○ **Create quick, snappy intros.** Keep your intros quick, clear, and to the point. Tell people what they're going to learn and then move on to the rest.

  - ○ **Create long form content.** Longer, more in-depth content tends to perform better than short content.

  - ○ **Make your content easy to read.** If you're going to create longform content, it has to be easy to read.

  - ○ **Embed videos.** Embedded videos can be a helpful supplement to text on your pages.

  - ○ **Internal links.** Linking to other, highly relevant pages on your website causes people to explore your site more.

SEO Factor #5: Content Freshness, Accuracy, and Depth

- **If a search is time-sensitive, it's important that it be fresh and updated.** If the information on one of your pages changes somewhat regularly, do your best to keep it up to date. As a general rule, try to update your content whenever there are significant updates to the information itself.

- **Google does their best to ensure that the information they show in search results is accurate.** If Google regularly returned incorrect search results, you wouldn't want to use it. Work hard to fact-check the content you publish. Check verified, trust sources if you're in doubt about something.

- **Covering a subject in-depth means that you provide all the information that searchers are looking for.** If you don't cover a subject thoroughly, people will come to your site, not find what they're looking for, and then bounce to another site. The more you cover, the more relevant your content will be to searchers.

SEO Factor #6: Site Authority

- **Some websites carry more authority than others.** Major news outlets carry more weight than websites run by a single person. When it comes to search results, Google tends to favor high authority websites. What makes a site authoritative?

- **The first key to authority is backlinks.** Sites with a lot of backlinks from a variety of sources are considered to have more authority than sites with a limited number of backlinks.

- **Another key to authority is topical expertise.** Google knows that no one can be an expert in everything. They prefer sites that focus on being an authority in one

- **Building the authority of a website is all about momentum.** The more extremely authoritative content you create, the more backlinks you'll attract. More backlinks result in your site being more authoritative.

SEO Factor #7: Security and Mobile Friendliness

- **Google takes the security of its users seriously.** They don't want to send people to an unsecure site where data could be breached. If your site isn't secure, you can make it secure using an SSL certificate. If you don't know how to install one of these, your webmaster should be able to help you.

- **Your site needs to be mobile friendly, meaning that it looks good on a smartphone.** One way to see how your site performs on mobile phones is to go to Google Search Console and look at the "Mobile Usability" report.

SEO Factor #8: Use Structured Data

- **Many web pages have text on them that is easy for people to understand but tough for the Google algorithm to make sense of.** Structured data is specific code you put on your pages that helps Google understand the content.

- **If you implement structured data correctly, it may show directly in the search results.** For example, have you ever searched for a recipe and seen things like bake time or ratings? That's the result of structured data being implemented.

- **You can create this type of information with Google's Structured Data Markup Helper.** You enter the URL of the page you want to edit and then Google will guide you through adding structured data to it.

SEO Factor #9: Optimize for Voice Search

- **Since the introduction of voice assistants like Siri, Alexa, and Google Home, voice search has exploded.** In order to optimize for voice search, think about how most people use it. It's almost always done in the form of a question.

- **The best way to optimize for voice search is include content that can be pulled by Google and given as the answer to a question.**

  - Create FAQ pages.
  - Shoot for the featured snippet.
  - Write naturally.
  - Keep it simple.
  - Boost your site speed.