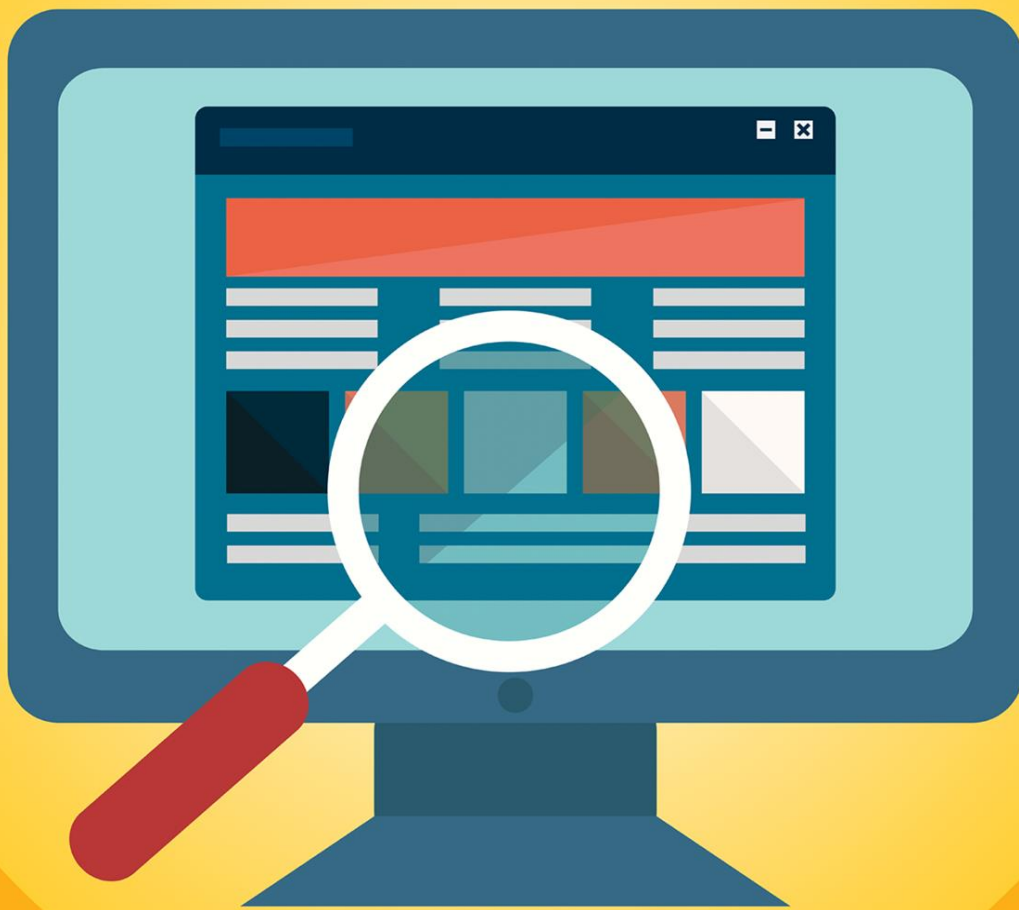# THE NEW GUIDE TO
SEO

The New Guide to SEO

The Most Up-to-Date Advice and Strategies Including Real-Time SEO, Voice Search, Content Marketing and More

Contents

CHAPTER 1

AN INTRODUCTION TO SEO – STILL KICKING

Chapter 1: An Introduction to SEO – Still Kicking

If you want to get the maximum amount of profit from a website, then you need to get as much traffic as you can. If you want to get the maximum amount of traffic to your website, then you need to get to the top of Google.

It's just that simple. Sure, you could "pay your way" to the top using ads, but—unless you really know what you're doing—you can waste a lot of money on ads.

And once your ad spend stops, your traffic comes to a screeching halt.

If you want to get to the top of Google, then you need SEO or "Search Engine Optimization."

Search Engine Optimization is the process of optimizing a website so that Google will be more likely to index it and ensure that it ranks highly for the most relevant key words and phrases. For example, if you have a website that sells hats, then you might try to get it to rank for the phrase "buy hats online." To do this, you would go through an optimization process that would involve both "on page" and "off page" strategies.

With any luck, you would eventually be able to get your website to the top of the SERPs for that term ("Search Engine Results Page") and thereby attract a huge amount of traffic. More importantly, that traffic would not just be from random visitors but would rather be from specific people who are looking for hats. Better yet, those people will be looking for hats at the very point that they came to your website (why else would they search for hats?) which means that they're ready to buy and it should only take a small push to get them to make that decision.

SEO can be a slow-going process but it is still possible to very reliably climb the ranks and get your website to a point where it will start getting more and more organic traffic from searches.

How SEO Works

How SEO Works

SEO essentially works by attempting to second-guess the algorithms used by Google to decide which sites to index and where to rank them. Google works by using bots, an index, and an algorithm. The bots, also known as "robots" or "spiders," are small pieces of code designed to head out onto the web and look for content. They read webpages and they add that content to a massive index.

Google uses that as a reference.

From there, Google will then use an algorithm to identify which content in that index is relevant to which search – and which is offering value to the end user. Ultimately, the aim of Google is to help people find interesting content that will be MOST relevant to what they're looking for.

This involves a lot of factors and the algorithm will look at how many links the content has, how visitors behave on that website, and the use of key phrases within the content. If a word or phrase is repeated often enough, then it is possible to deduce that said word or phrase is likely to be the subject matter – and thus it should come up in searches for matching terms.

SEO basically works by predicting (mostly guessing) how the algorithm works (because no one can be completely sure) and then using that information to engineer your website to get the maximum number of visits. Some people (especially professional SEO's) think it means gaming the system and this in turn can allow you to "trick" Google into believing that your site should be number one.

Of course, it's not quite that simple though and actually, as we dig deeper, we'll see that there are other ways of looking at SEO that are more effective. Apart from anything else, Google is *constantly* updating its algorithms (usually with words beginning with "P" like Penguin, Panda, and Pidgeon) and that means that second-guessing Google can get you into trouble.

It is estimated that Google uses over 200 factors in its algorithm and makes changes to it almost daily (several hundred times per year).

Read that again. I'll wait.

Being effective at SEO means having an up-to-date understanding of how it works and it means knowing the core principles that underlie the different strategies. That's where this book comes in. Read on and you'll learn which old, outdated strategies you need to avoid, how to work *with* Google to get the very best results, and how to future-proof your site for upcoming changes.

This is the modern guide to SEO for modern marketers and site owners. This is your SEO bible and your

key to unlocking incredible success on the web!

CHAPTER 2

SEO – WHAT IT USED TO MEAN

Chapter 2: SEO – What It Used to Mean

We're going to start this book with a little history lesson.

Why? Because understanding how SEO used to work, how it has progressed, and what you now need to avoid is a very good way of creating context and helping you to understand what SEO means *today*.

When SEO was first born, Google's algorithm was a lot simpler and manipulating it to your own ends was a lot easier as a result. Back then, Google looked at two key factors in determining its rankings. Those factors were:

- Keyword density
- Link profile

Your link profile (also called "backlink profile") is essentially determined by how many links you have pointing at your website, coming from other sites. This serves two important roles. First, links help Google's robots to find your website. Bots "crawl" the web by reading content and following links from one site to another. If you have a link on a site that Google has already indexed, then this will allow it to find yours and add it to the network.

But this isn't that important. Google's bots are really good and you can help them by submitting a simple "site map."

At the same time, Google views links as testimony – assuming that a website would only link to another website if it thought that website was good and had something valuable to offer its users. Google would also assume that if you have links from 20 websites about hats, then your site is probably going to be about hats as well (especially if the anchor text has your search phrase in it).

The other factor was keyword density. Keyword density meant how many times your website would repeat the words that you were trying to rank for. The more content you had and the more often you repeated the same phrase throughout that content, the more likely you would ultimately be to get ranked for that search term and to show up high in the SERPs.

Of course, it was also important to research the keywords and to make sure that they were actually being searched for. For this, marketers could use Google's keyword research tool in order to check the volume of searches and to get an idea of how much competition was there. A savvy optimizer would be

able to then look at the terms that had the highest search volumes and lowest amount of competition –
and then try to rank for those phrases specifically.

Enter Black-Hat SEO

This simple algorithm makes a lot of sense in theory and should have helped Google to find content that
people would be looking for quickly and easily. It would read the content in order to see which site was
most relevant for that term and it would look at which sites had the most links from other websites!

But the problem was that people eventually cottoned on to the way this worked and began to take
advantage of it. SEOs realized that all they had to do to get to the top of Google was to create as many
links and as much content (with keywords) as possible.

Thus, webmasters began to spam link directories and content farms – submitting their links everywhere
they possibly could. They began to pay other content creators to place their links on their pages and
they would also "trade" links. Most websites ended up with a massive list of "links" somewhere on one
of their pages, which would just be other random sites that had contacted them and asked to exchange
links.

Worst was what started to happen to the content. In a bid to create as much content as possible and to
use the keywords as often as possible, creators began to churn out content in huge quantities while
giving no regard to quality. They also began using "keyword stuffing," which essentially means repeating
keywords over and over again, even when the content failed to make any sense.

A typical website from the early 2000's might read:

> "Are you looking to **buy hats online**? Then you have come to the right **buy hats online** website!
> This is the best place to **buy hats online** for anyone who wants to **buy hats online Carolina.**"

As you can see, this content gets completely nonsensical and would be highly off-putting for any real visitors looking to make a purchase!

And then it got worse *still*. Creators began to actively steal content from other site owners and then "spin" it in order to make it unique. (Google won't rank duplicate content, otherwise it would risk making every search result identical!) Content spinning essentially means that you are taking an article or a blog post and then using software in order to exchange many of the words for synonyms.

Thus, a sentence that read:

"These are the softest, warmest, and most attractive hats on the net!"

might have become:

"These are the most comfortable, most insulating, and most beautiful hats on the web!"

And because the site owner didn't have to write that content themselves, this means that they can publish thousands of posts in a short space of time and "bomb" Google.

That's the theory at least. The reality is unfortunately that most spinners do this instead:

"These is the squishiest, hottest and very best beautiful hats on the fishing net!"

Again, it's just gibberish.

By placing thousands of links on other sites using their keywords as the anchor text and by filling their site with tons of useless content, website owners were able to get themselves to the top spot of Google. This system was so easy to abuse, that some people could even get completely unrelated websites to the top of specific SERPs against the owner's will. You could make it so that searching for "big idiot" would bring up a picture of your friend for example. This was called a "Google Bomb."

Obviously, this started to make a mess of Google's results. Google had to adapt and get smarter…

TEXT 1
Lorem ipsum dolor sit amet, consectetur adipiscing elit.

TEXT 1
Lorem ipsum dolor sit amet, consectetur adipiscing elit.

TEXT 1
Lorem ipsum dolor sit amet, consectetur adipiscing elit.

SEO

TEXT 1
Lorem ipsum dolor sit amet, consectetur adipiscing elit.

TEXT 1
Lorem ipsum dolor sit amet, consectetur adipiscing elit.

TEXT 1
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TEXT 1
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CHAPTER 3

WHAT SEO MEANS TODAY

Chapter 3: What SEO Means Today

Google had to change and adapt to maintain its spot as the number one search provider. To do that, it had to clamp down harsh on those who were gaming its system and penalize sites that were cheating to get to the top spot.

It did this by looking for obviously "spammy" strategies and de-indexing the responsible sites or downgrading them.

- Sites with keywords in their URL no longer enjoyed the same advantage (though they weren't necessarily penalized for it).
- Sites with huge numbers of inbound links from low-quality websites were de-indexed.
- Sites caught buying links were de-indexed.
- Sites that stuffed keywords were severely punished.
- Sites that had lots of backlinks with the same anchor text were treated as highly suspect.

And the list goes on!

Meanwhile, Google started to show preference toward sites that were longer, that linked out to other quality resources (which previously would have hurt your SEO), and more.

These changes came in the form of algorithm updates which had recognizable animal names and which got a *lot* of press from the internet marketing community at the time. These were "Penguin," which was designed to reduce the effectiveness of unnatural backlinks, and "Panda," which was designed to favor sites that were high quality.

Google doesn't want a website owner to be able to artificially climb its SERPs. Rather, Google wants websites to climb the ranks only when they are genuinely valuable and popular with the audience. It wants to see natural, organic links that you haven't paid for and it wants to see deep, relevant, and interesting content. The old techniques that were once used to spam Google became known as "black

hat SEO" and the industry entered a dark period…

The Death of SEO?

It's hard to overstate just what an impact these algorithm changes had on the SEO industry at the time –
and on countless other industries as well.

These changes ended up completely de-indexing massive websites overnight. Sites that had followed
conventional wisdom to get to the top spot on popular SERPs were now completely de-indexed, cutting
off the vast majority of their traffic and sales.

This led many to proclaim that SEO was dead. It was no longer possible to game the system because you
would be penalized for buying links or for stuffing keywords.

And even if someone could break Google's new algorithm and work out a new way to game the system,
it would only be a matter of time until Google changed its algorithm again.

The industry as a whole was in trouble and SEO became a dirty word. Many people felt that SEO and
black hat SEO were synonymous. And more and more people began to turn to social media marketing,
with the likes of Facebook and Twitter massively on the rise.

But was SEO really dead?

Not at all – it was just going through a metamorphosis.

**SEO is not the techniques we use to get our sites to the top of Google. SEO is simply the *objective* of
getting to the top of Google. Any technique you use to try to get more attention from Google could be
considered SEO.**

So, if Google wants us to create a "high quality website," then "creating a high quality website" *becomes* SEO. The hard part is just unravelling what Google's idea of a high-quality website should look like!
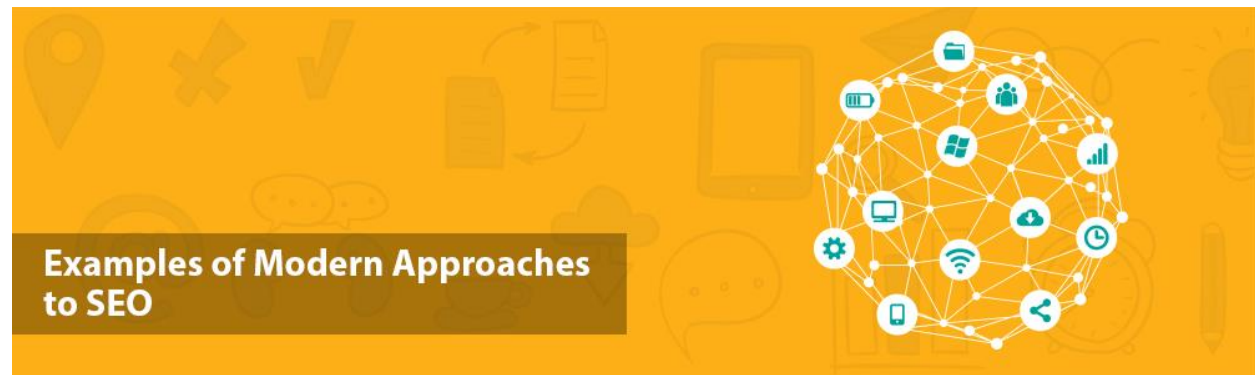
Examples of Modern Approaches to SEO

Keyword research is still useful, for example, but we now know that Google doesn't want us to *overly* stuff our website with those search terms. Instead, the recommendation hovers at around 1-2% keyword density. If you write a long article and include the search term a few times, then that should be enough as long as it's also in your code a little, or in your file name.

It's also worth noting that Google looks for keywords in specific places in your content and gives those extra value. Google will consider it a strong sign if your keywords are used in your headers, or in the first paragraph of your content.

Google *also* looks for synonyms though and related language – which is something that we'll discuss more in future chapters.

And it no longer cares how many links you can get – it cares *far* more about how high quality those links are. If your links are from lots of highly trusted websites, then you'll find it does great things for your ranking.

Google is also now looking at things like bounce rates – how long someone spends on your website. And it is looking at how your site renders on mobile and how quickly it loads. You can now get penalized for typos and mistakes.

And Google is now looking at social sharing signs. If you have lots of '+1s' from Google+ for example, then this can have a large positive impact.

In short, Google is looking for signs of quality, relevance, and great design. At the end of the day, Google does not care about you as a content creator. You are not Google's customer! Google's customer is the

end user who searches for a keyword phrase because they want to get relevant information or find the answer to a question.

If you forget the specifics and instead make your aim to deliver high quality content, consistently targeted towards a specific subject matter, then your goals will be aligned with Google. That means that Google will *want* to share your content with its users. And it means that each update and change that Google makes should actually *benefit* you as a creator.

This is what good SEO is about today! Forget trying to "trick" Google and instead think about your users and think about working *with* Google!

CHAPTER 4

HOW TO CONQUER ON-PAGE SEO

Chapter 4: How to Conquer On-Page SEO

Regardless of all the changes that have happened, it's still possible to separate our SEO into largely "On page" and "Off page."

On page of course refers to all the strategies that you can use within your pages to get Google interested in your site. This begins with content – and it begins with having a stronger understanding of the subtle changes Google has gone through in recent times.

How to Make Excellent Content

One of the first things you're going to need to do is fill your site with great content and use your keywords throughout. There's a fine line to be walked here: You need to repeat the phrase a few times to ensure that you create that association but at the same time, you also need to make sure that you don't overdo it and appear to be spamming.

Too vague? As mentioned, it's now agreed that the optimum 'keyword density' for on page content is 1-2%. That means you can use your phrase once per every 100-200 words. But you also need to use your common sense a little: Some keywords are easier to use in a natural manner than others and making sure that your content sounds natural should always be the number one concern. Some keywords will be hard *not* to repeat 100 times! Others will never feel that they can come up naturally.

The user *always* comes first. So, if you can't fit the keyword in naturally anywhere, just forget it and use it in your image alt-text!

The length of your posts is also an important consideration. Back in the days of spammy SEO, almost every post was 500 words long, or less. Today, you'll have the most success by writing posts that are longer and more in-depth. Imagine that your reader is going to sit down with a cup of tea and really dive deep into the subject – that's the kind of experience that you should be delivering!

This has another advantage because it means that you can repeat your keyword phrase a lot more while keeping your density low. If you repeat your keyword 100 times and your content is 1,000 words long then that's a 10% density. If your content is 5,000 words long, that's 2% density!

Of course 5,000 words is *too* long for most blog posts. Instead, the general consensus is that an ideal blog post will be somewhere in the region of 800-1,500 words.

But again: Remember, you serve your visitors first and foremost. These are the people that you want to impress and that means that you shouldn't worry *too much* about length – do what comes naturally to your subject matter.

Oh and while you're at it – try to vary the lengths of your posts a little. This again looks more natural and suggests to Google that you're not following a strict "formula" of any kind!

Introducing a Conversational Google

At the same time, you also need to consider something called "Latent Semantic Indexing" or "LSI." This is basically a fancy term that explains how Google now understands actual meaning rather than just looking to match words. The way it does this is at least partly by looking for synonyms and related terms when trying to answer questions. In short, don't just use the exact keyword phrase but be sure to use lots of relevant and related language.

This is important partly because it can prevent a mismatch between searches. If someone searches for a homonym, like 'duck', how does Google know whether they mean the animal or the movement? Simple: By looking for related terms like "duckling" and "feather" or perhaps "dodge" and "dive."

At the same time, the use of synonyms and related language again shows Google that there is lots of content revolving around the same topic – it's not just a case of having mentioned the search term a few times in an otherwise irrelevant piece of writing.

So if you're writing about bicep workouts, then you need to make sure to include lots of related language, like:

- Arms
- Triceps
- Dumbbells
- Training
- Weightlifting

Doing this will confirm the subject matter of your site and will look a lot more natural and useful than if you just use the phrase.

And for the same reason, it can also be a good idea to use variations on your keyword phrase and to have "secondary" search terms.

For example, if your keyword phrase is "build massive arms," then you should also try to include the terms "build big arms," "build big biceps," "get big biceps," etc. Google now knows that this means the same thing but won't be as likely to penalize you for keyword stuffing. It also makes you look like a better writer for your visitors!

Essentially, try to keep in mind that Google no longer works by trying to match the search terms exactly in your content. You can see this yourself when you search Google. Search "get big arms" and many of the results that come up won't actually include those precise words!

Likewise, linking out to relevant resources might help Google to better understand the topic of your pages and posts, while also demonstrating that you are trying to provide extra value to your visitors.

Schemas and Structured Data

Schemas and Structured Data

And on that same note, you should also look at rich snippets. Using "structured data," you can highlight to Google certain key elements of your content: recipes, dates, company names, scores, etc. This helps Google show some of that information in the SERPs (search engine results pages), which attracts more visitors to your site. There are plugins that will let you do this easily, or you can do it through meta tags. Either way, you'll use this to do things like highlighting the ingredients in a recipe, or the show times of a play, or the score in a review.

This is important because it lets Google understand your content even better than it is already able to. Google is no longer just a search engine but rather an AI (Artificial Intelligence) – this is the direction that Google is heading in and being able to understand and utilize this might just be the key to SEO success in the future.

Right now, using structured data and rich snippets will allow information from your site to appear right in the SERPs. This way, if someone searches for a recipe, they'll be able to see the ingredients for your version before they even click on your link! This means your listing will take up more space *and* demonstrates the value of your site. And all that in turn means that you're going to attract more clicks than a site without that information.

Design and Layout

The next element of on-page optimization is the site design itself. Using breadcrumbs for instance can help a lot, as can using alt-tags for your images so that Google knows what they are. More important is the actual function of your website: Does the page load quickly? Is it mobile-friendly? Mobile friendliness in particular is something you absolutely cannot ignore in 2017 and beyond.

In terms of the actual design and function of your website, the main goals are to ensure your site will load *quickly* and that it will look great on mobile. Again, this helps to keep people on your site longer

because it will be enjoyable for them to be there. Avoid using too many plugins which will slow you down and try not to inundate your visitors with adverts and pop-overs.

Did you know that using light colors, like light blues, can actually help to keep people on the page longer by making them feel more relaxed? Consider this when picking your theme.

Likewise, choose a theme that will adapt to the size of the display viewing it and make sure that you take advantage of things like caching to keep your site nippy. Themes that do this are called "responsive," in that they respond to the shape and size of the display they're being viewed on. This works by removing certain elements, by rearranging menus, etc. and by shrinking images. Note that mobile friendliness also means things like having large buttons (which are easier to click with a finger rather than a mouse) and also avoiding "mouse-over" drop-down menus that again can't be operated on a mobile without a mouse.

The best way to ensure that your website is responsive, that it looks the part, and that it will encourage the maximum engagement, is to use WordPress. WordPress is a CMS (Content Management System) that makes it incredibly easy to build a responsive website and then add a custom theme that you have downloaded (free or paid) or made yourself. Using WordPress removes much of the guess work and makes it very easy for you to implement new layouts and even to add things like rich snippets by downloading the right plugins. There's a massive online community to support your development and the tool is used by many of the biggest sites on the net – meaning that it is a "proven quantity" as far as SEO goes.

Seeing as WordPress is free, you're really just making life *harder* for yourself by using anything other than it to build your website.

Check your mobile friendliness here (https://www.google.co.uk/webmasters/tools/mobile-friendly/) and your page speed here (https://developers.google.com/speed/pagespeed/insights/).

More On-Page Optimization

More On-Page Optimization

As mentioned, there are a few miscellaneous tips that can also help you to improve your on-page SEO. For example, it's generally accepted that using copyright notices and legal disclaimers can be seen as a positive sign by Google as these will make your website look more professional and more like a "real business."

Think as well about how you're going to help Google find the content *within* your site. Having a site map can be very helpful for indexing, for example. *Definitely* avoid the use of Adobe Flash, seeing as Google is unable to read that type of copy. You can also insert your search terms in your site's code – by including it in file names (the file name of an image for example) and including it in the permalinks (the URLs of specific pages – which should match the title of your posts).

Then you have the behavior of your visitors. In other words, how long are your visitors staying on your page? Do they click lots of internal links? Do they scroll down the page? Are they leaving comments? Google wants to see that your site is offering value to your visitors and the best way they can do that is by looking to see if people are actually enjoying the content you've created. Your site design is all about getting your visitors to spend time on your page then and to interact with it. You can do this by using "related posts" and by making your comments section appear more interesting and easier to use. But you also do it by simply ensuring that your site looks great, performs well, and is filled with interesting and relevant content. Try to avoid adverts or bad design elements that are going to instantly put people off and cause them to leave your website!

Remember, Google wants to see that people are spending time on your website and the best way you can ensure this happens is by making content that people want to read. Moreover, you need to ensure that the content is presented in a way that encourages people to stick around. Forget dense blocks of text with no images. Instead, create content with lots of headers, that's well spaced out, and that uses large beautiful pictures throughout. In terms of the actual writing, try to use a narrative structure where possible to really pull people in. Tell a story, use cliff hangers, and make it impossible for your visitors not to move down to the next line!

Ultimately, it comes down to making sure that you're providing the very best experience for your visitors – but doing so in such a way that Google can see it.

CHAPTER 5

HOW TO HANDLE OFF-PAGE SEO

Chapter 5: How to Handle Off-Page SEO

This is the basic strategy you will use for your on-page SEO then. But what about link building? How has that changed in recent years?

Once again, the key is to focus more on quality rather than quantity.

If you once had a thousand different links all coming from low-quality websites, then this could now actually stand to *hurt* your SEO as it will just look like link spam. If you've been guilty of using these old practices, then you might consider using Google's Link Disavow tool (https://support.google.com/webmasters/answer/2648487?hl=en). This allows you to tell Google that you didn't *ask* for the low-quality links and will prevent them from affecting your ranking (the fact that tools like this exist show that Google does still support good SEO, by the way).

Once you've removed all your low-quality links, you then need to start looking for high-quality links. Which ones are those?

Simple. They're the ones that follow *all* of the advice that we gave in the last chapter on on-page SEO.

These should be sites that are relevant to your niche/industry but also that are filled with the very best quality content and that seem to have an actively *engaged* user base. In other words, look for the very best sites in your niche! Make your site is as good as theirs and then approach them for a link.
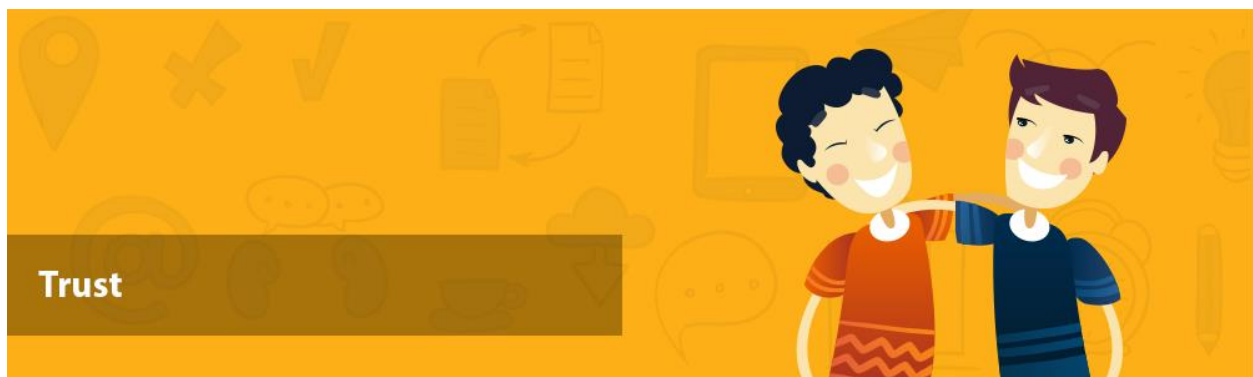
Trust

The sites that Google will rank highest for a particular search term are the ones that appear the most relevant and that have the best content and best design. At the same time though, they will also be the ones that have the most *trust*. This means that Google considers them an authoritative resource and expects the information on their site to be accurate and well-written.

This is something that sites like Moz have tried to quantify with terms like '"Trust Flow." However, there's no defined method of determining a site's trust and instead we have to *infer* the best strategies for building trust... as usual!

What we do know is that there are some sites that Google trusts absolutely implicitly. These are sites like Harvard.edu, BBC News, etc. And how does it know that it can trust them? The current understanding is that Google will trust sites that either have a very well-recognized brand name (like the BBC, or The Verge) or sites that have .edu or .gov domains.

So how can the rest of us thrive? Simple. We try to get links that come *from* those highly trusted resources. If you were able to get a link from BBC News for example, then this would absolutely *transform* your success. You would find that you got hundreds of thousands of visits to your site simply from people clicking on your link and this would result in hundreds of or even thousands of dollars in AdSense and sales *overnight*.

Meanwhile, if the content that was linked to was good, then thousands of these people would post your link and share it.

And more importantly, Google would sit up and take notice that *the BBC* had linked to your site. A highly trusted authority is linking to your site – suggesting that your site is *also* a highly trusted authority.

This would be worth more to you than a million links you bought, traded, or posted on link directories!

Google News and Other Important Sites

If you can't get a link from the BBC, then where *can* you get a link from that will have a similar result? Unfortunately for many of us, it's nearly impossible to get a response from a massive site like the BBC (unless perhaps we have a news-worthy story and a useful contact) and thus we're going to have to look elsewhere.

A good place to start is with the Google News section of the SERPs. If you search for something like "election results" during an election, then you'll find that a few results are highlighted at the top of the page with an image and a snippet of text. You can also click the "News" tab for more news stories.

These news stories aren't manually curated but are rather selected from sites that Google trusts. If a site is in Google News, then that is a pretty sure sign that the site has "made it" – especially if it's a competitive niche.

This shows you *exactly* where you need to be getting your links from. If you can get links from any of these sites, then you're going to get almost the same boost as you would get from the BBC (to a lesser degree).

But how did these sites make it so big?

Perhaps because *they* got links from the BBC – in which case you are getting some of the benefit *via* their link to you.

And the same thing would happen if they had a link from a site that had a link from the BBC.

Try to think of this as a game of "degrees of separation." You might struggle to get in touch with the very biggest authorities on the web but if you can indirectly trace a link back to a big site, then you'll enjoy more love from Google the closer that relationship is.

Working with Influencers

Chances are that you already know what the biggest sites in your niche are. These are the sites that are household names and that everyone goes to when they want information on your subject.

Chances are that they're *also* the same sites that end up in Google News. And because they're so big, they've probably got links coming in from other big sites.

So how do you get these big sites to answer you so that you can get some benefit from their links?

And seeing as you're no longer allowed to buy links or do "link swaps," how do you get them to link to you?

Generally, the answer that most SEO experts recommend is using "guest posts." A guest post is like a link swap except that instead of swapping a link for a link, you're swapping free content for a link.

Your job is to scope out sites that might be responsive to a message from you, to look at the type of content they publish, and then to write a post that's along the same lines. You then contact the site owner by email and show them your content, asking if they would like to publish it. The deal is that they can publish your post but only if they include a link back to your site in exchange.

They can do this by putting your link and bio in an "author box," or they can do it by including your link naturally in the content of the article. By "embedding" the link this way, you make it look a lot more natural and you can send even stronger signals about the topic of your post.

Remember that it's also highly important for the topics of sites linking to you to match the topic of your site. This way, you are not only posting on a site you chose in your niche, but you're also filling it with a *directly relevant* post.

This is a fantastic way to build links but there are a few caveats. The first is that you still need to be careful. Matt Cutts (who used to work on Google Search) has made it clear that over-use of guest posting can still lead to penalization. This is *still* a form of link manipulation.

Likewise, you need to be careful about constantly using the same anchor text and generally being predictable. Mix it up!

Finally, consider that it will still be hard to get an answer from top influencers in your niche. The solutions include:

- Making sure that your content *and* the site you're linking too are great quality so that the creator will be happy to be associated with them
- Delivering real value in the guest post
- Spending some time developing a relationship first – perhaps by sending some emails and maybe by leaving some comments on their blog

- Starting relatively small and working your way up. Look for blogs that are just ahead of yours. Each time you succeed, your site will get bigger and you'll be able to approach a slightly bigger influencer next time!

- Use your existing contacts. Maybe you have a friend who owns a blog?

- Network in person. For making a big impact, nothing beats the power of actually *meeting* a blogger or site owner in person and making a connection that way. Go to SEO networking events and generally don't be afraid to pick up the phone!

Link Bait and Creating Organic Links

Link Bait and Creating Organic Links

A key lesson to apply to pretty much *every* aspect of SEO is not to get carried away when you find ideas that work. For example, just because quality is key, that doesn't mean that you need to disavow *every* low quality link and only ever build links from the top sites.

Why?

You guessed it – it looks unnatural again and actually looks like manipulation!

Take a look at sites like the BBC and you'll see that they have *huge* and highly diverse link profiles. They'll have links from massive sites but also tiny, spam sites. When a site is truly successful, it will lose control over all of its links. Thus, it can actually be useful to make your link profile as diverse as possible.

One of the very best ways to do this is with "link bait." Link bait is an article that you have written specifically to try to get as many links to it as possible.

How? One answer is to make your article a powerful resource – meaning that it will become a place for people to learn a particular subject matter. An example of this is the excellent guide to testosterone published on *The Art of Manliness.* This post goes much more in-depth than many similar blogs on the same subject and, as a result, countless other articles have linked to it as a resource.

Another option is to create a post that will somehow support a discussion. A good example of this is the post "How to Win an Argument with a Nutritionist," which includes links to studies that disprove outdated notions about nutrition. The article is perfect link-bait because people will regularly use it in online arguments to prove their point.

Backlink Research

Backlink Research

Finally, one more very useful strategy for your backlink strategy is to perform backlink research for other sites. Look at your competition and look at which sites have got the most traffic in your niche. Then, once you've found which ones those are, try to get links from the same site. Not only does this method ensure that you're going after the right links that have a proven track record but it also helps you to find links that are likely to give our guest posts!

CHAPTER 6

WHY CONTENT MARKETING IS THE NEW
KEY TO GOOD SEO

Chapter 6: Why Content Marketing is the New Key to Good SEO

Good SEO means forgetting SEO and concentrating on your user. It also means forgetting SEO in that you are going to be trying to merge your different marketing strategies in order to create one bigger approach. It means trying to write amazing posts that you share to get more links and it means writing great content that keeps people on your page longer.

Stop thinking in terms of "SEO" and "social media marketing" and instead think about your SEO in terms of "content marketing." Regardless of your strategy, there is no doubt that content is absolutely the most important asset when it comes to attracting traffic and impressing Google.

But just what is content marketing?
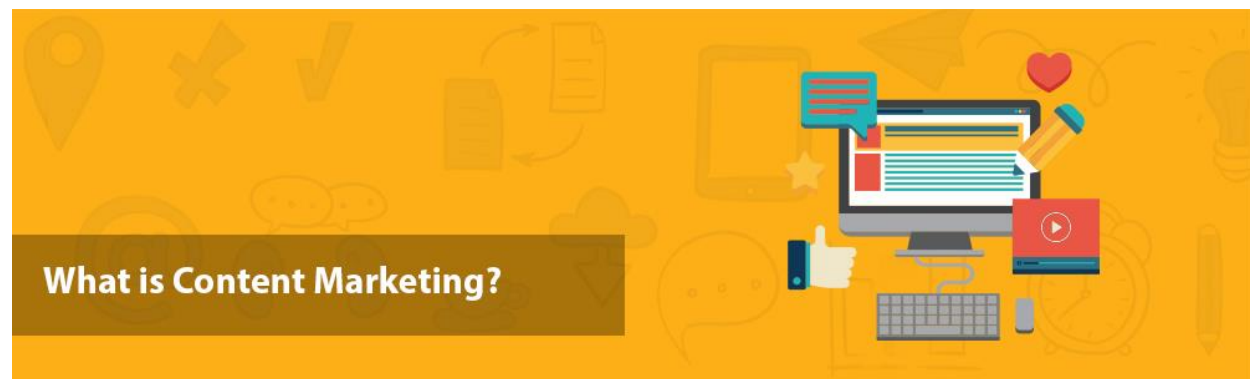
What is Content Marketing?

Content marketing is about creating content that will help Google find your site and posts and ensure you rank highly in the search engine results pages. While this is a powerful and useful effect, it's actually only one part of what content marketing is about.

At the same time, content marketing is about building a readership on your site and ensuring that people begin to trust what you have to say. It means demonstrating your knowledge and point of view to the point where people seek you out as an authority. Once you get to that point, you'll be considered an expert in your field and you'll be able to greatly influence your audience – possibly influencing their

buying behavior.

How to Build Trust and Authority

So how do you get to this point? The key is to think about the sites and blogs that have influenced *you* over the years and the ones you read regularly. How did they get to that point?

This isn't about building trust with Google but rather it is about building trust with your readers so they want to keep coming back.

The main thing is delivering value. Each post that you create for your blog should provide some useful and/or interesting information that is actionable. At the same time, it should offer something that isn't available elsewhere and it should be in-depth and comprehensive.

It's a tall order. But you can do it!

This "differentness" is incredibly important and is something that too frequently gets overlooked. If you're trying to stand out in a crowded niche – say the fitness niche – then it is not enough to simply write posts on how to get abs or how to lose weight. There are *countless* articles out there with the exact same title and subject matter.

Instead, you need to concentrate on offering something that will be different – which might mean writing about an entirely new training method or about something that examines the psychological motivation to train.

Always ask yourself: Would *you* read that content?

Meanwhile, you need to be *consistent* in posting this kind of content and you need to be smart with your branding. Your brand needs to evoke your mission statement and your ethos. People should know from your website design and logo alone what kind of subject matter you are likely to deal in and they

can expect from your site. This is also how you can build brand recognition and a consistent image across different forms of marketing (including on different forms of social media).

Write for a specific type of person and try to make your brand into a movement with a clear objective. That way, people can actually get excited about you and will really get behind what you're trying to do!

The main goal is to offer consistent value and to become a source that people trust. When someone searches for the answer to a question, they might read your post and be impressed. If you then come up in the search results again, then they might recognize you and be more likely to click your listing over the rest. Then they might decide to look around the rest of your content after they've been impressed a few times. Eventually, you become their "go to source" for answers in your niche. Well done You just won at content marketing!

The key is to consistently deliver value so that people come to your site for answers. This is also ironically what will get other good sites to *link* to your site. This is the perfect example of "emergent SEO." In this case, you're working with Google by writing amazing quality content and Google is rewarding you. This is how you truly grow in an organic way.

Content marketing like this also makes a lot of sense from a business perspective. That's because people will be much more likely to buy from you if they know, like, and trust your brand!

CHAPTER 7

USING SEO COMPANIES AND HOW TO
MEASURE THE SUCCESS OF AN SEO
CAMPAIGN

Chapter 7: Using SEO Companies and How to Measure the Success of an SEO Campaign

If all this is sounding a little complex, then you might be considering skipping the hard part by outsourcing your SEO. But can you trust an SEO company to do the best possible job for your site and for your brand?

While there are a ton of great SEO companies out there providing valuable work and helping companies to reach new heights in terms of their exposure and profits, the unfortunate fact of the matter is that there are probably more *not* so great SEO companies.

These are the companies that didn't get the memo when Google changed. They're the companies that still insist on keyword stuffing and link spam.

Worse are the companies that *knowingly* don't do anything and just take your money.

And the problem is that it isn't easy to tell the two apart. How do you know if your SEO company is offering great value for money, or whether it's actually just twiddling its thumbs and sending you large invoices every few months?

The answer is that you need more robust tracking. But we'll get to that in a moment. Read on to find out why SEO is such a tricky industry and what you can do to protect your investment.
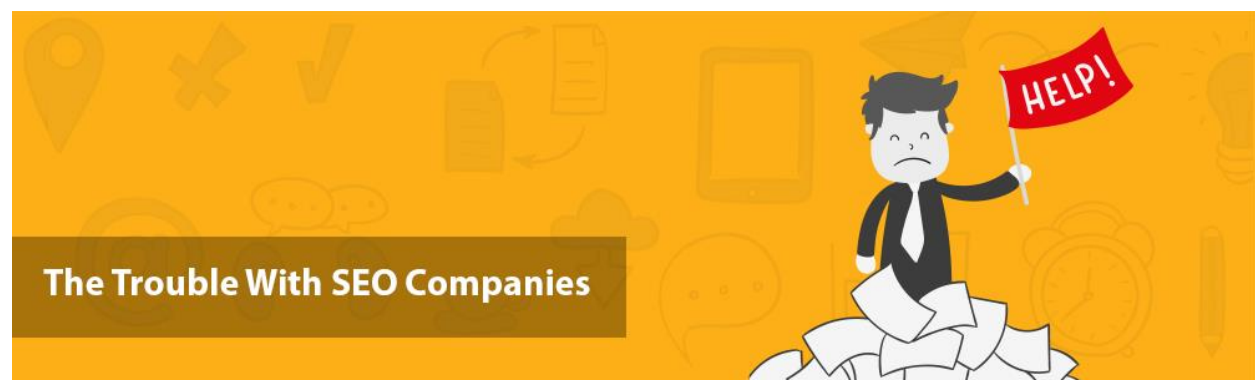
The Trouble with SEO Companies

This isn't a problem you face with most other industries. If you hire someone to paint your fence, then at the end of the day you can see the work they're doing and you can decide for yourself if you're getting your money's worth. Ultimately, your fence is either going to be painted, or it isn't. There are no half measures.

The same is true for cleaning companies. And for marketing consultants. And for accountants.

And…and…and…

But when you hire someone to do SEO, you actually can't *see* the results right away. It can take months for SEO to have a positive impact on your site's ranking and even when it has been done well, there's no guarantee you'll get to page one.

And worse, most people don't have a comprehensive knowledge of SEO and don't know what their companies *should* be doing to help them get the best results. How can you check in on someone if you don't know what they're *meant* to be doing?

In fact, even if you handle your SEO yourself, it can *still* be hard to know if it's working or not!

Using Metrics, Tracking Tools and Google Analytics

All you can really ask is that you see metrics regarding the SEO campaign. Some of these metrics can be more useful than others.

You can ask for the number of links that have been built for instance. You can ask for the Page Rank of the pages where those links have been built (although "page rank" is now largely a deprecated measure). Use everything you've learned in this book to ensure that those are highly-quality links and not just link spam. You need to get long-term results, not a short term boost.

You can track changes in your positions in the SERPs (Search Engine Results Pages). Many SEO companies will use tracking software which lets them see your site climbing the rankings for different terms over time. They can then use these to deliver you a report showing how your site has climbed since their intervention.

If you are handling your own SEO, then you might still choose to use a tracking tool in order to keep an eye on your success over time and ensure that your efforts are getting results.

But what does any of this tell you?

Because here's something else to consider: Getting to the top of Google is *not* the end goal. Even if you get to the top of Google, there's no guarantee this will bring more profits for your business because you need to ensure that the people finding your content are *targeted* and that those people are converting.

Or to put it another way: All that really matters is the bottom line. If you're a business and you're paying for SEO, then you need to know that you are getting *more sales* because of that SEO and that you're earning more money. This way, that SEO is offering ROI and that means it has been money well spent.

Savvy companies then will track the ROI of their SEO spend by using a tool called Google Analytics. This is the most well-known analytics tool for webmasters and marketers and one particularly useful feature it has is the ability to set a "goal" and then track the traffic that makes it to that goal.

If you're trying to sell a product, then your "goal" might be the "thank you page" that you show after a purchase. This allows you to see not only that you're getting more traffic but also that you're getting more targeted traffic that's actually *converting*.

Better yet, Google Analytics will be able to tell you where those converting visitors came from. And specifically, you'll be able to see if someone who used your search term eventually ended up buying your product. These are people who have bought products from you *because* of your SEO efforts.

Using PPC to Research Your Keywords

If you hire an SEO company to help you rank for a certain search term, then you are probably missing the point. The better way to approach this is to hire an SEO company to help you increase your profits or your brand awareness. Thus, the very best SEO companies are those that use a combination of different marketing tools – combining everything from SEO to social media to brand management.

Part of this is choosing the right search terms. So if you let your SEO company choose your search term and they don't increase your profits, they might be good at ranking still but not good at strategy. It's important to know whether ranking for the particular phrase you're interested in is actually going to translate to tangible results.

The same is true if you're doing SEO on your own. One way you can check how successful your SEO is likely to be *before* you spend lots of time and/or money on it, is to use PPC.

PPC is of course "Pay Per Click." This is a type of advertising that involves paying for advertising based on keyword phrases.

The idea here is that you test keyword phrases using PPC. Find out what works and what doesn't. Use the successes to begin to build your SEO strategy.

Kill the keyword phrases that don't do well in your PPC trials.
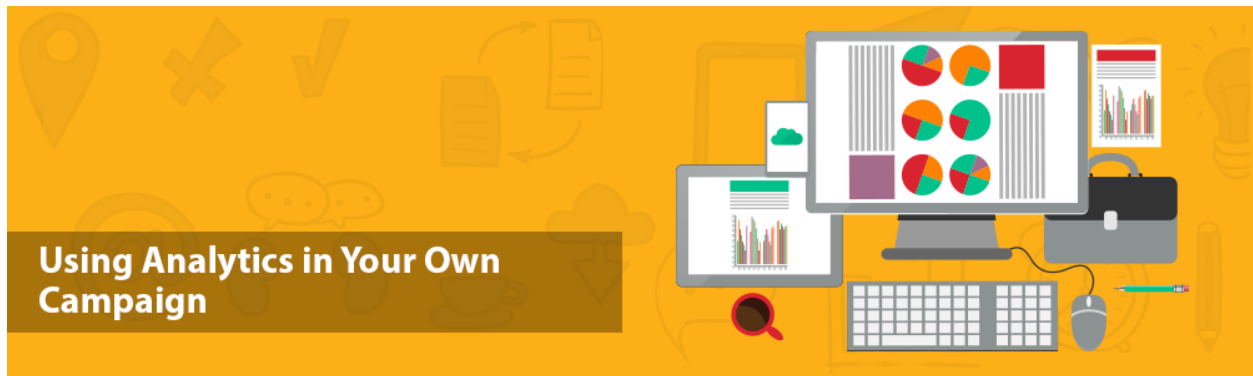
Using Analytics in Your Own Campaign

It is equally important that you use analytics in your own SEO campaigns for the very same reasons. Good SEO is about constant iteration and seeing which actions are having the best impact on your tracking.

Struggling to rank for a certain term? Then you can consider aiming for another one.

Finding that people from an unexpected search term are converting more highly than those from other search terms? Then it might be time to switch gears and start trying to rank for that phrase instead!

Setting up Google Analytics is thankfully rather simple. First, you'll need to head over to Google Analytics (http://www.google.com/analytics/) and then you'll need to add a small tracking code to each page of your site. If you're using WordPress, then you can simply use a plugin to do this. You can then set up your "view," which will let you choose which stats you want to look at.

Some useful things to look at here are your audience overview (key data regarding who is looking at your site, which can help you to better target specific demographics), acquisition (where your traffic is coming from), real time (which shows you how many people on your site right now), and the aforementioned "goals."

CHAPTER 8

REAL-TIME SEO AND THE FUTURE OF SEO

Chapter 8: Real-Time SEO and the Future of SEO

With everything we've covered here, you should now know everything you need to know in order to begin a modern and effective SEO campaign.

The problem though, is that – as we've already mentioned – SEO is something that is constantly evolving and changing.

And we already know that Google has a lot planned for its search algorithm in the future...
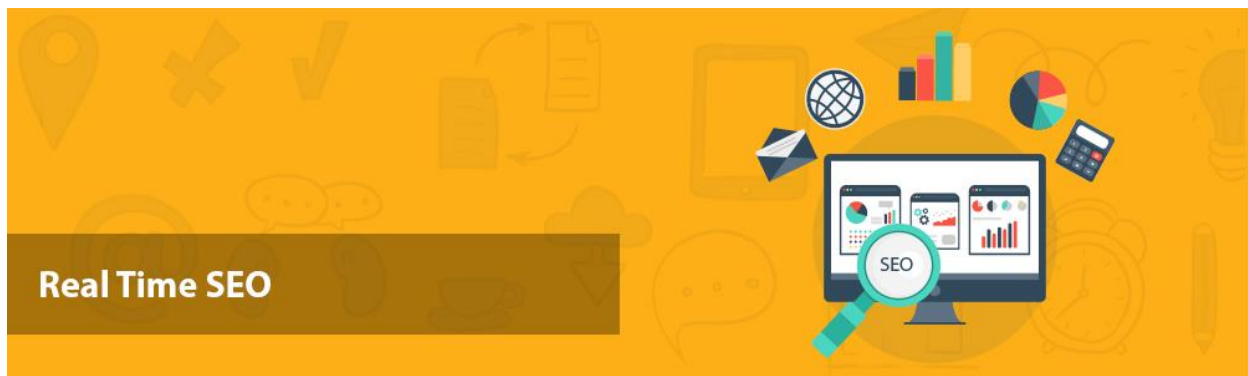
Real Time SEO

The first big change we can expect going forward is the introduction of a real-time algorithm. This means that any changes made to your site's SEO might be reflected immediately in the search results. This is expected to affect Penguin predominantly, which means it will have the biggest influence on inbound links and whether your backlink profile is mainly made up of high quality links or spam. In this case, adding a spam link to your site could result in an *immediate* downgrade to your ranking.

Likewise though, the reverse could also be true. Using the disavow tool could help you see an immediate recovery – while a very good link could result in an immediate boost to your site.

It's also not too much of a stretch to expect that in future, we might see this start to apply to other aspects of SEO – including the ranking of sites and pages. We already see news stories appear very quickly in Google's search results.

So what should you do to make sure that you will benefit from these changes? How can you future-proof your site in this regard?

One key tip will be to stay on top of your links disavowing and to make sure that you are constantly adding links and removing the unnecessary ones. Bigger sites may in the future need to have whole dedicated teams working on keeping their link profile healthy around the clock.

Likewise, make sure to keep updating your site regularly and to keep the date as a schema in all your content.

Voice Search and AI Assistants

One good way to know what's coming in the world of SEO is to keep your eyes peeled to industry news sites and specifically Google's own blog.

Another is to think about the direction that Google is heading in and to try and guess what its larger plans are.

Right now, everything is pointing toward a heavy investment in voice search and AI. Google is *not* just a search tool. With the capability of reading and understanding human language, Google is an AI. And what's more, it is shaping the way we develop our content – whether we like it or not.

Google is embracing this more and more with each new update and each new product. Google Now is the name of Google's assistant service that combines search, a digital assistant, and all the data that Google collects about us into one incredible tool.

This is the real reason that Google had to move toward latent semantic indexing. It needed to understand the content, rather than just look for matches.

This is why Google needed to start using rich snippets and structured data – so that it could understand key facts from the web.

This is what allows Google to use its quick answers box. Ask Google: "How old is Barack Obama" and it won't just bring up a website – it will tell you.

Google also has "localization" and "previous query" functions. These allow it to suggest searches based on what you *previously* searched. For example, if you often research a particular celebrity, then in the future, Google might recommend searches relating to that celebrity.

Google's personalized search also takes this into account, while its local search ensures it will also be able to find results that are relevant to the area you're in.

All of this combines when you use Google Now via voice search – through Google Hello or Google's new Pixel phones. Here, you are able to conversationally ask Google what time it is, what the highest mountain in the world is, how high is it exactly?

This is the direction that Google is moving in but what does it mean for the future of SEO? Will creators miss out when Google starts providing visitors with answers *without* them needing to visit our pages?

KGO: Optimizing for Google's Quick Answers

For now, creators can start to focus on the Google Knowledge Graph, which is what powers many of the more complex components on the SERPs. Use semantic markups to ensure that Google will be able to find the answers to your questions, build authority so that Google will know to trust your site, and try to use nouns in your language to make it "machine readable." Being featured in Wikipedia is also thought to be useful for "KGO" (Knowledge Graph Optimization). Linking out to quality resources is also thought to be good for your KGO.

Will you gain visitors from being featured in the knowledge graph? Perhaps not – but this is certainly an indication that you have gained Google's trust and it can do a lot to help improve your brand awareness and gain more trust from the *users* as well. For those reasons, it is certainly a worthy goal.

CHAPTER 9

YOUR ACTION PLAN AND CONCLUSIONS

Chapter 9: Your Action Plan and Conclusions

We've covered an awful lot of ground and even speculated at what future SEO might entail. At this point, you may be wondering where to start and how to put everything you've learned into action.

Let's simplify for a moment then shall we? Here are our key takeaways:

- Google is getting smarter – to the point of becoming an AI with a LOT of personal information about its uses
- Google is increasingly understanding what content actually means, rather than just what it *says*
- You should not try to *trick* Google
- Work with Google to provide your users with the most relevant, well-informed, and entertaining answers to their questions
- Prove that you are trustworthy by connecting as closely as possible to high-authority sites
- Use structured data to further explain your topics
- Don't keyword stuff – write naturally using synonyms, relevant terms, and lots of nouns
- Build a brand and focus on consistent quality
- Post regularly and build the trust of your users with content marketing
- Use guest posts and aim for the sites that have Google's trust already
- Think of SEO as one small part of a much more cohesive marketing strategy
- Combine excellent posts with social sharing and link bait
- Measure and monitor what is working and update your strategy on the fly

Another tip is to make sure you do your research and examine which terms to target before you set out. But even more important than that is to choose the right *niche*. This means picking a niche that has a large enough appeal to give you a big market but at the same time, it means picking a niche that won't be too competitive for you to make any dent in it. Look for subject matter that caters to a specific audience and that people can really get passionate about.

Make sure that *you* are passionate about it, too. Because when you really love what you're writing about, all the high-quality content, great connections, and consistency are easy. Stop looking for quick wins and focus on building a trustworthy brand filled with incredible information. If you do that and you do just the smallest bit of marketing to give yourself a push, Google's algorithm should do the rest and reward your enthusiasm!

Updates

Need help with your business? Email me. I answer all emails myself.

bill.davis@internet-marketing-muscle.com

I have written several books about blogging & WordPress for the Amazon Kindle platform:

The Ultimate Guide to Blogging Series