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WHAT SMALL BUSINESSES NEED TO KNOW ABOUT SEO

KEYWORDS-EVERYTHING YOU WANTED TO KNOW BUT WERE AFRAID TO ASK

In today's day and age, most businesses have at least some form of web presence. This is because based on a 2016 report on the role of search in making decisions about Products, Brands, and Services, more than 93% of consumers use an internet search when making buying decisions. In fact, a 2017 Search Engine Journal Report said 51% of all traffic comes from organic search results, and a whopping 91.5% of all traffic is generated by sites that appear on page one. With those statistics it makes sense to have an SEO-optimized website based on specific keywords, or you risk losing out on a large percentage of potential sales.

When it comes to websites, I think of them like retail stores. Just as you can have a store that sells great products for a great price, if your store is not located where the traffic is, the store will flounder.

Related Post: Why Your Location May Be Bad For Your Success
Many businesses will work really hard to build a great looking and functioning website but ignore optimizing it for the proper keywords. As s a result, these websites get little or no traffic and the business flounders.

As a business owner, you owe it to your business to make sure your website is where people can find it and not on some side street away from the public eye. To make your website visible to the public, it needs to be found and indexed by the search engines and to be properly indexed by major search engines to show up in the right search queries, you need to focus on your keywords.

Keywords are not something that you tell a search engine directly anymore. Instead, keywords are words or phrases that you use when you create your content to help search engines discover for themselves what the page is about. So how do search engines know what are your keywords? Many times, it is based on their density.

KEYWORD DENSITY

Remember the goal of any search engine is to return a list of pages in its search results that the user expects to see. To do that, search engines crawl a page and look at the content for clues to try to determine what the page is really all about. A page could be a blog post, landing page, home page, or any other page on your website.

Words that are used fairly often give the search engines a pretty good clue about the focus of a piece of content. When you use keywords in your title, as headers, in your descriptions and several times in the content, the search engine will assume that the subject of the page is your keyword.

With a **keyword density that is too high**, a search engine may think that you are just keyword stuffing and may penalize the page. On the flip side, if your **keyword density is too low**, the search engines may never find out what the page is about, which is not good either. Remember, although you should try to make the focus of a page obvious to search engines using keywords, a real person will use your content to make a decision and therefore it must read naturally.

While there is no one-size-fits-all keyword density percentage, tools like Yoast SEO uses a focus keyword field and indicate the density and make recommendations. When it comes to keyword density, it has a lot to do with the density of other pages that search engines assume are also ranking for the same keyword.

If the average keyword density is 1% and your page has a 2% density, the search engine may penalize the page. Likewise, for another page with another keyword where the average keyword density is 3% and yours is only 2%, the search engine may rank your page lower for having too few occurrences of your keyword. So, there is no correct answer when it comes to keyword density- it all depends on where your page fits density-wise, with respect to all the other pages trying to rank for the same keyword.

SEO experts report that what they see most often when analyzing their client's content is not that the keyword density is too high, but rather that it is too low.

Here is what Matt Cutts of Google has to say about keyword density

LONG-TAIL KEYWORDS IN SEO

When we use the word Keyword, we are most often not talking about a single word like "shoes". Single word keywords are very competitive and will cost you too much time and money to rank for.

For example, a Google search for the keyword "shoes" produces 6.7 billion result pages. Instead think about keywords as the words you might enter into a search field, or say, for a voice search on Siri, Amazon Echo, or Google Assistant.

When most people refer to keywords, they are really talking about what is more accurately called long-tail keywords. Long-tail keywords contain several related words. For example, "Newton Running Shoes" produced just 46 million results. This long-tail keyword is much more specific and would be much easier to rank for because each word helps to make the keyword a little more specific.

Shoes could encompass boots, dress, and athletic shoes. Adding the word "running" makes the keyword a bit more specific, and adding the brand "Newton" makes it more specific still. In fact, you may even want to make such a keyword even more specific by adding a gender such as "Men's Newton Running Shoes". A Google search for "Men's Newton Running Shoes" returned only 97 results, and would be very easy for you to rank for.

LATENT SEMANTIC ANALYSIS

Search engines like Google use what is known as Latent Semantic Analysis in their complex algorithms to improve the accuracy of search results.

Earlier technologies struggled with using synonyms to characterizes natural language. Specifically, search engines had a hard time with changes in meanings that came with how the word was used.

For example, the word "labor" could mean human resources, effort, or it could be what a woman goes through to give birth. With a Latent Semantic Analysis, related words in your content are used to help the search engines understand the meaning of keywords. If "labor" and "employee" existed in your content, the search engine might assume that you are talking about labor as the people a business hires. If "labor" and the word "toil" co-existed

in the same content, the search engine would infer that labor was related to effort, and if "labor" and "birth" or "baby" co-existed, the context of labor likely referred to childbirth. So when it comes to finding keywords, search engines are pretty good at discovering your intent as a content creator even if you use different terms throughout your content or use words that need more context to discover their ultimate meaning.

20 STEPS TO FIND POWERFUL KEYWORDS GOOGLE WILL RANK HIGH

Having an optimized website or landing page so that you appear in a user's search query is one of the most important things that you can do for your marketing effort. Using the proper keywords that you can rank for in a search engine is how you become visible. As we discussed in Keywords – Everything You Wanted to Know But Were Afraid to Ask, keywords are how you tell search engines what your page is all about. However, many of searches for a specific keyword often means that there is also plenty of competition, making ranking harder. The key is to find powerful keywords that have a good search volume but limited competition, which can give you the best chance to appear on page one of a search.

The first step in showing up on page one of Google is picking powerful keywords that the customer segment you are targeting uses, and then be sure that your website and any landing page you develop uses these keywords in both their copy and tags. The following is a 20-step process you can use to find your most powerful keywords that you will have a good chance to rank for.

COMING UP WITH AN INITIAL KEYWORD LIST

1. Start by making a list of the most obvious words the customer segment you are targeting uses. I recommend using just a word processor like MS Word or similar to collect all your initial keywords.

2. Search engines like Google use what is known as Latent Semantic Indexing in their complex algorithms to come up with natural language relationships that define a page's intent. For some businesses that only use a few keywords, there is a Latent Semantic Analysis Tool that will give several free searches. You can simply add your keywords into the tool and it will return a list of additional possible keywords. You can even click on one of the recommendations to get even more alternative keywords to add to your list. However, each search will cause you to use up your number of free searches, which can be depleted pretty quickly. For each search, copy the alternative keywords to your word processor document.

3. Next, review your list to make sure you list contains words that are properly spelled. Today most browsers correct for spelling errors. However, that said you may want to include words that are commonly misspelled. For example, one of the most commonly misspelled words in American English is the word "beautiful" that is often spelled with two L's. You may also want to consider alternative spellings for the same word. For example, in America, we use the word "center" while the English version is spelled "centre".

4. Next take your keywords and look for synonyms to add to your initial list.

5. You should look for commonly split or merged words and add them to your list. For example, "Knowledgebase" as one word vs "Knowledge base" as two words or "email" as one word vs "e-mail" with a dash between e and mail.

6. You should also consider both the singular and plural versions of the words. For example, "books" with an 's' is used more than just "book" in searches, but at this point, we might not know that. So, for now, it is better to add many different variations of your keywords. as we will refine the list later based on actual search volumes and competition.

7. These days, it is a good idea to consider voice search keywords. Voice search keywords are based on how you would speak for a search vs typing it into a search field. For example, you might type "best Italian restaurants" into a search field. However, you might ask Siri, Alexa, or your Google assistant "What are the best Italian restaurants near me". In fact, according to Search Engine Land, 82% of smartphone shoppers use "near me" searches.

8. That brings up the use of Geo Terms such as adding a town, zip code, military base, or other location that identifies as part of your keywords. Instead of "best Italian restaurants" which has tons of competition, "best Italian restaurants in Colorado Springs" will produce a more relevant search and will allow you to rank better.

9. You may also want to include your company name, especially if you are a franchise.

USING GOOGLE TO POPULATE AN UNFILTERED KEYWORD LIST

Now it is time to put Google to work to help you understand search volumes and competition.

Google now requires you to run an AdWords campaign to get access to their keyword planner search results data. To keep it free and to unlock the Google Adwords Keyword Planner features, for now, you can create a campaign with a short list of made up keywords and a small budget and then bid so low that it is unlikely that your ad will ever show up, so as not to be billed by Google.

Bing also has a keyword planner but it is not as good as Google, in the opinion of many SEO experts. That said, Bing does not require you to have a campaign running to access their keyword planner.

You can also use a free trial period to do your keyword research and then cancel your subscription. For example, Wordtracker.com has a 7-day trial and Moz has a 30-day free trial.

Since Google is the largest search engine and their keyword planner is very powerful, I will use the Google Adwords Keyword Planner tool as my example.

10. Login to or create a Google AdWords account, go to keyword planner tool and select "Discover new keywords".
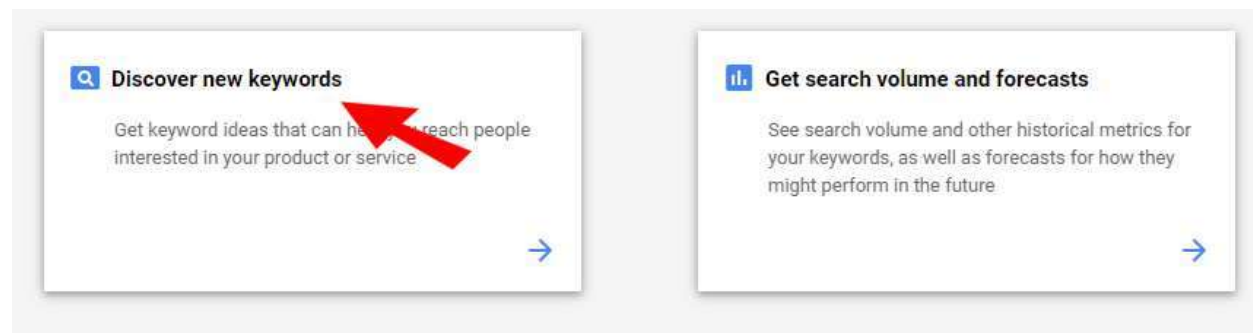

11. Copy and paste the first ten keywords into the "Enter words, phrases, or URL related to your business" block and hit Get Results. You can enter keywords from your Initial list, ten at a time into the search box., any more and Google will just eliminate them. You can also enter a landing page for a competitor, and Google will find what it thinks are the keywords, but that is beyond the scope of this post. Since you already have a list of potential keywords, break them into groups of ten longtail keywords.
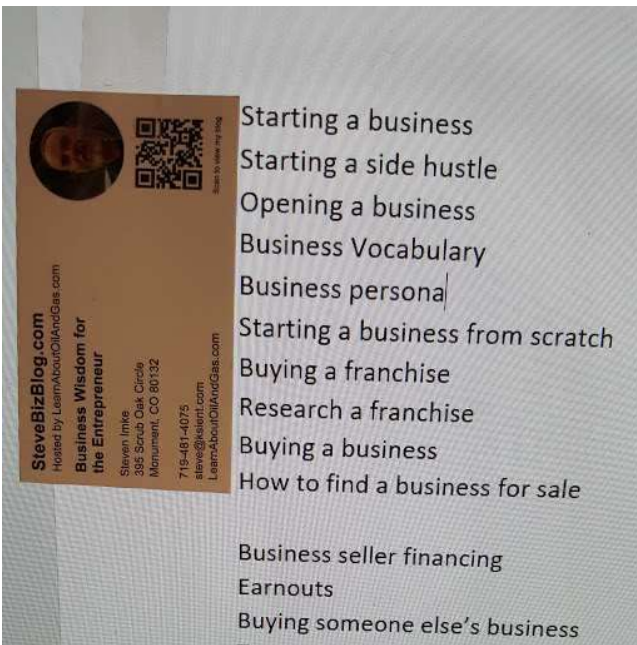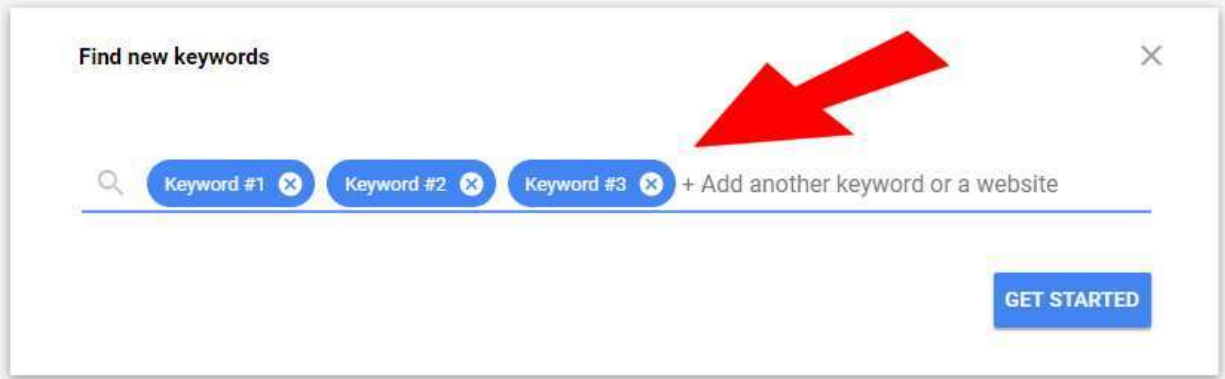
Tip: I have used a business card to mark the spacing of ten keywords, which I tape I to my screen as a guide to how much vertical space ten words takes up. This helps me break up my list and prevent me from having to count out ten lines each time to insert a line space.

12. At the top in Blue letters, you will see "DOWNLOAD KEYWORD IDEAS". Clicking on it will export your list as a CSV file that we will analyze in a spreadsheet like Excel.
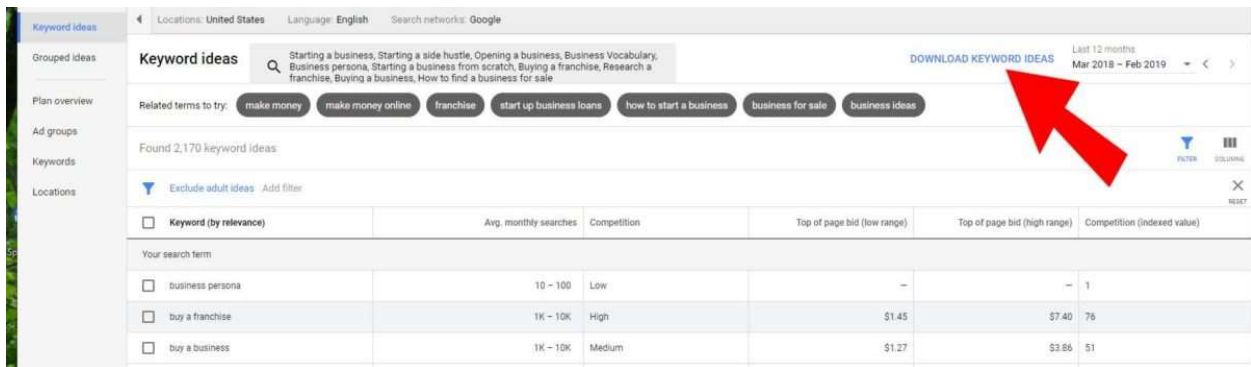
13. Since you will have to do a search with all of your initial keywords, which requires several searches, we will consider the first CSV file to be your master list. As you continue to go through your initial list of keywords ten at a time, and using Google to export their results each to a new CSV file, you will want to append each list to your master list, so that in the end you will have just one large list to work with.

When I did this for my blog, I had about 120 keywords in my initial list. After completing the above process, I had over 21,000 keywords.

USING A SPREADSHEET TO CREATE A FILTERED KEYWORD LIST

14. Adjust the column's width to make it readable and delete unnecessary columns. I recommend that you keep the following columns: Keyword, Min search volume, Max search volume, Competition, Competition (indexed value), Top of page bid (low range), and Top of page bid (high range).

	A	B	C	D	E	F	G
		Min search volume	Max search volume		Competition (indexed	Top of page bid (low	Top of page bid (high
1	Keyword			Competition	value)	range)	range)
2	business persona	10	100	Low	1		
3	opening a business	1,000	10,000	Medium	56	1.96	6.23
4	Research a franchise	0	10	Unknown			
5	starting a business	10,000	100,000	Medium	57	2.66	10.11
6	starting a business from scratch	100	1,000	Low	29	1.5	7.51
7	starting a side hustle	100	1,000	Low	17	0.2	19.09
8	buy a franchise	1,000	10,000	High	80	1.5	7.59
9	how to find businesses for sale	100	1,000	Medium	44	0.89	5.67
10	business vocabulary	100	1,000	Low	3	0.18	1.45
11	buy a business	1,000	10,000	Medium	50	1.25	3.84
12	startup	10,000	100,000	Low	3	1.11	6.65

15. Next, it is time to remove all the duplicate keywords from this master list. You can do this in Excel by selecting the entire sheet and using the main menu, selecting "Data" >

"Remove Duplicates" in the Data Tools group > "Unselect All" and select only Keywords column.
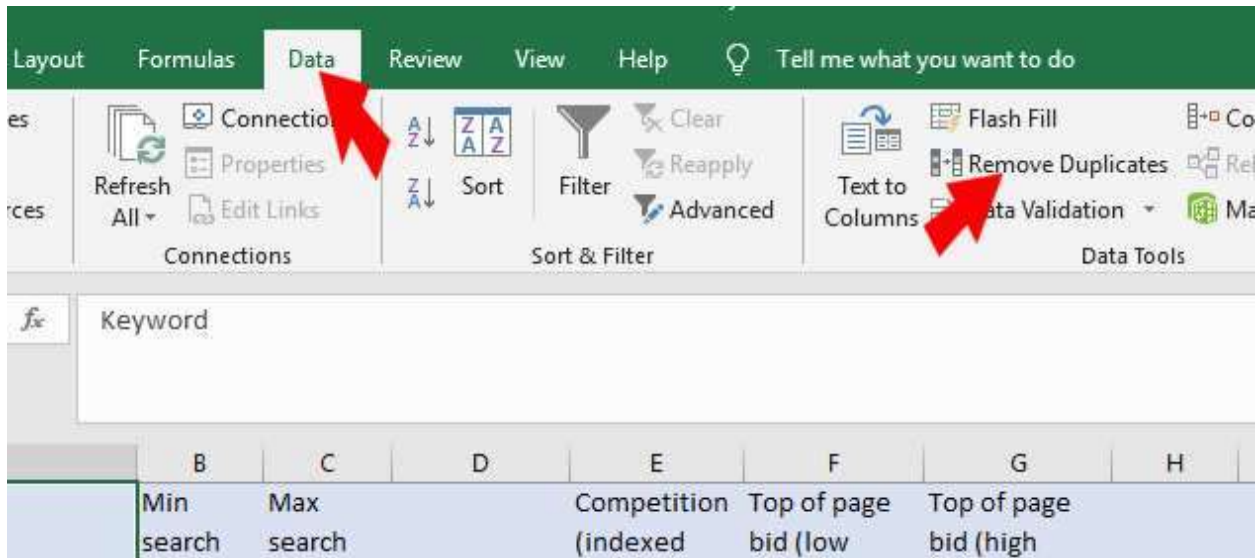
16. This is your full sheet of unfiltered potential keywords. To avoid any mistakes, I recommend you have the file and copy the entire sheet to a new sheet to preserve the unfiltered list. I will often label the main sheet as "Master Keyword List", and the new sheet "Filtered".

17. Sort your filtered sheet by "Minimum search volume" and delete all keywords with a "0" value.

18. Sort by "Competition" and delete all rows that are "Unknown"

19. Now it is time to refine your unfiltered list to just the keywords that you have a realistic chance to rank for. I recommend that you sort your refined list by "Competition" and delete all the keywords that have "High" competition with a low search volume of say, 10-100 from your list.

20. Finally, I copy all the "Low" Completion keywords with more than 1,000 "Min search volume" to a third sheet in your spreadsheet. What you have left are the powerful keywords that you can rank for.

21	contractor vs employee		1,000	10,000	Low		3
22	relationship marketing		1,000	10,000	Low		3
23	geographic segmentation		1,000	10,000	Low		3
24	market segmentation examples		1,000	10,000	Low		3
25	buzz marketing		1,000	10,000	Low		3
26	startup		10,000	100,000			3
27	blue ocean		10,000	100	w		3

| | | Master Keyword list 2019 | Filtered | **Low comp Med search** | ⊕ | |

WHAT TO DO WITH YOUR POWERFUL KEYWORDS

Now that you have a list of powerful keywords, you will not be targeting areas you can't rank for. As Neal Patel says, "Find a shoulder niche by looking for less competition."

Your unique list of powerful keywords will be used for both on-page and off-page SEO, which are the topics that follow.

ON-PAGE BUT HIDDEN SEO TECHNIQUES YOU NEED TO UNDERSTAND

SEO is a buzzword with many freelancers and companies selling you their service. Many claim that they can make your business appear on page one of Google. However, the key that is often overlooked in this initial discussion is if they can get you ranked for a popular keyword that is relevant to your business.

It is one thing to get ranked by the search engines on page one for some nonsensical term, but quite another to get ranked for a keyword that is associated with what your business does.

What I have discovered is that there are many freelancers that claim to be an expert in SEO, but far fewer are what I would call real experts. Most understand the basics of SEO and will sell you a bill of goods based on false claims. Many freelancers and even many SEO companies can get away with it because most customers don't speak the language of SEO, and are forced to rely on the advice from their SEO consultant.

Related: How To Know If You've Got a Legitimate SEO Company

This post is intended not to make you an SEO expert, but to provide you with enough ammunition where you can at least have an intelligent conversation about SEO. This knowledge will help you discover which SEO freelancers or SEO companies are the real deal and which are the posers.

WHAT IS SEO?

SEO is primarily about getting the search engines to recognize your content so that they can return a contextually accurate result for a search. The way this is done is through the search engine's understanding of your Keywords learned through their indexing process. When we talk about on-page but hidden SEO techniques, we are talking about all the clues you can provide the search engines to tell them about your content.

URL CLUES FOR SEO

One way to let search engines know what a page is about is through the use of your URL. If your URL is GardeningTipsByBob.com, the search engine can infer that the content must be about gardening. If you have landing pages and you place them in a directory on your domain, the directory and the filename are used by search engines to uncover even more about what the content is.

```
GardeningTipsByBob.com/Flowers/Full-Sun/Wild-Daffodil.html
```

Using a hierarchy of folders allows you to enter keywords into the actual URL. The search engines will assume that the above content is about tips to grow *flowers*, in particular, ones that require *full sun*, and even more specifically how to grow *wild daffodils*.

If a folder or a file name is a multi-word keyword, use a dash "-" to separate the words and DO NOT leave a space or use an underscore. Search engines like Google see a dash as a word separator. In fact, Google specifically recommends that you use a dash and not an underscore.

However, do not include lots and lots of folders to keyword-stuff your URL or Google will see past this effort to game its algorithm and penalize you.

By default, a Content Management System like WordPress often uses folders for year, month, and day. This is good for sorting content based on when it was created, but not very helpful for SEO. You can Google "URL Rewriting" to find tools that will help you change the URL or Permalink of your content.

TITLE TAG CLUES

When you are writing a post, you will provide a title for your piece which your Content Management System will format into your Title Tag. It is best to limit the size of your title to about 50-60 characters. In fact, in the search results, only the first 50 to 60 characters are displayed, while longer titles are truncated.

Google also weighs the words at the front of the Title Tag more than at the end, so be sure to use your keywords at the beginning of a title. By placing your keywords closer to the front of your title, it is also more likely to be read by the user in the search results.

It is recommended to use title case, which is where the first letter of each principal word is an upper-case character because title case has been proven to be easier to read and make the principle words pop out.

KEYWORD META TAG – NOT WORTH IT ANYMORE

In the old days, search engines used to determine what the page was about by looking at the Keyword Meta Tag. However, web developers abused this and most SEO experts believe that search engines no longer give any weight to Keyword Meta Tags. Therefore, today it is recommended by many SEO experts to not waste your time with them.

DESCRIPTION META TAG – YOUR CALL TO ACTION

Search engines do not use the Description Meta Tag to rank a page, but it should not be ignored because it acts as a call to action to get the user to click on the link. By default, search engines will use the first 160 characters in the body text to populate the description. However, it is better if you populate the Description Meta Tag with the content you want to appear in the search results.

If you use the Yoast SEO plugin, you can use the "Edit Snippet" to enter your description text for the Description Meta Tag.
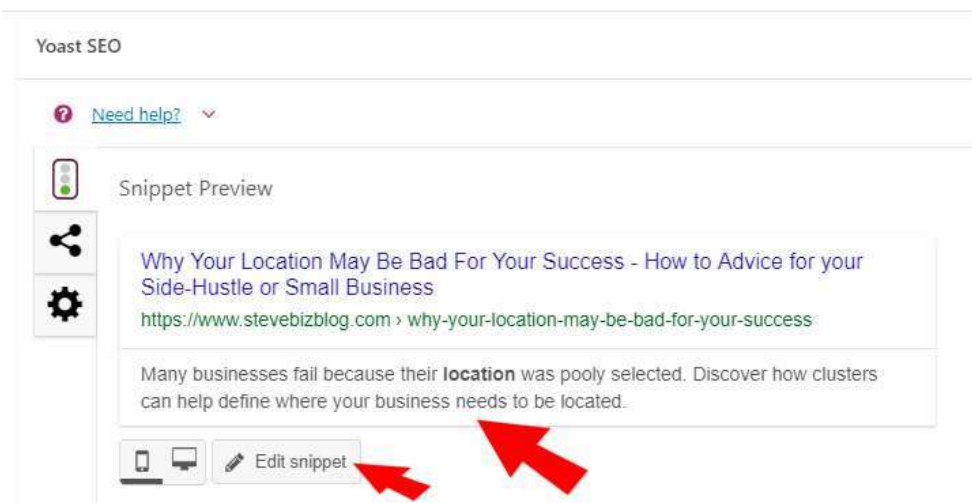
If you don't use Yoast and are just using WordPress for example, the "Excerpt" text you provide will be used as the Description Meta Tag.

While a description can be much longer, Google will truncate any text over 160 characters. In many cases, Google will also add a date at the beginning of the description in its search results, which will count toward the 160 characters. It is recommended that your text in the Description Meta Tag be shorter than 160 characters. When you edit the Snippet in Yoast SEO, the results are calibrated to show you when you exceed the 160-character Google limit, however, it does not take into account the size of the date if added by the search engine. While a search engine will not use the text in the Description Meta Tag to rank the page, it is recommended that you use your keywords in it, because Google will highlight the keywords in the description which will make them stand out to the reader. The following is a search result when I entered "category of adopters" into Google. As you can see the words I typed appear bolded in the description text.

Pro Tip: When you write your Description Meta Tag, it is recommended by the experts that you use title case and not sentence case, as title case has been proven to be easier to read

when scanning. When you have a word that you want to draw to the reader's eye, you should consider using all upper case to draw the eye to these words- but don't over do it.

Given the character limits, it is not necessary that your Description Meta Tags be written in complete sentences. It is recommended that you write them using snippets of text to make better use of the limited space.

OTHER META TAGS FOR SEO

For the experts, there are a bunch of other tags, but the above are the key ones. The majority of the other meta tags as used to pass information to platforms like Facebook and Twitter.

```
17  <!-- This site is optimized with the Yoast SEO plugin v9.7 - https://yoast.com/wordpress/plugins/
18  <meta name="description" content="Many businesses fail because their location was pooly selected.
19  <link rel="canonical" href="https://www.stevebizblog.com/why-your-location-may-be-bad-for-your-su
20  <meta property="og:locale" content="en_US" />
21  <meta property="og:type" content="article" />
22  <meta property="og:title" content="Why Your Location May Be Bad For Your Success - How to Advice
23  <meta property="og:description" content="Many businesses fail because their location was pooly se
24  <meta property="og:url" content="https://www.stevebizblog.com/why-your-location-may-be-bad-for-yo
25  <meta property="og:site_name" content="How to Advice for your Side-Hustle or Small Business" />
26  <meta property="article:publisher" content="https://www.facebook.com/stevebizblog/" />
27  <meta property="article:tag" content="Location" />
28  <meta property="article:tag" content="Retail" />
29  <meta property="article:section" content="Small Business Planning - Operations" />
30  <meta property="article:published_time" content="2018-12-12T14:00:00+00:00" />
31  <meta property="article:modified_time" content="2019-02-13T23:34:15+00:00" />
32  <meta property="og:updated_time" content="2019-02-13T23:34:15+00:00" />
33  <meta property="og:image" content="https://www.stevebizblog.com/wp-content/uploads/2018/12/shop-2
34  <meta property="og:image:secure_url" content="https://www.stevebizblog.com/wp-content/uploads/201
35  <meta property="og:image:width" content="1280" />
36  <meta property="og:image:height" content="960" />
37  <meta property="og:image:alt" content="Abandon Shop" />
38  <script type='application/ld+json'>{"@context":"https://schema.org","@type":"Person","url":"https
    ["https://www.facebook.com/stevebizblog/","https://www.linkedin.com/in/stevenimke/","https://www.
    "#person","name":"Steven Imke"}</script>
39  <!-- / Yoast SEO plugin. -->
```

WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW ABOUT ON-PAGE VISIBLE ELEMENTS AND SEO
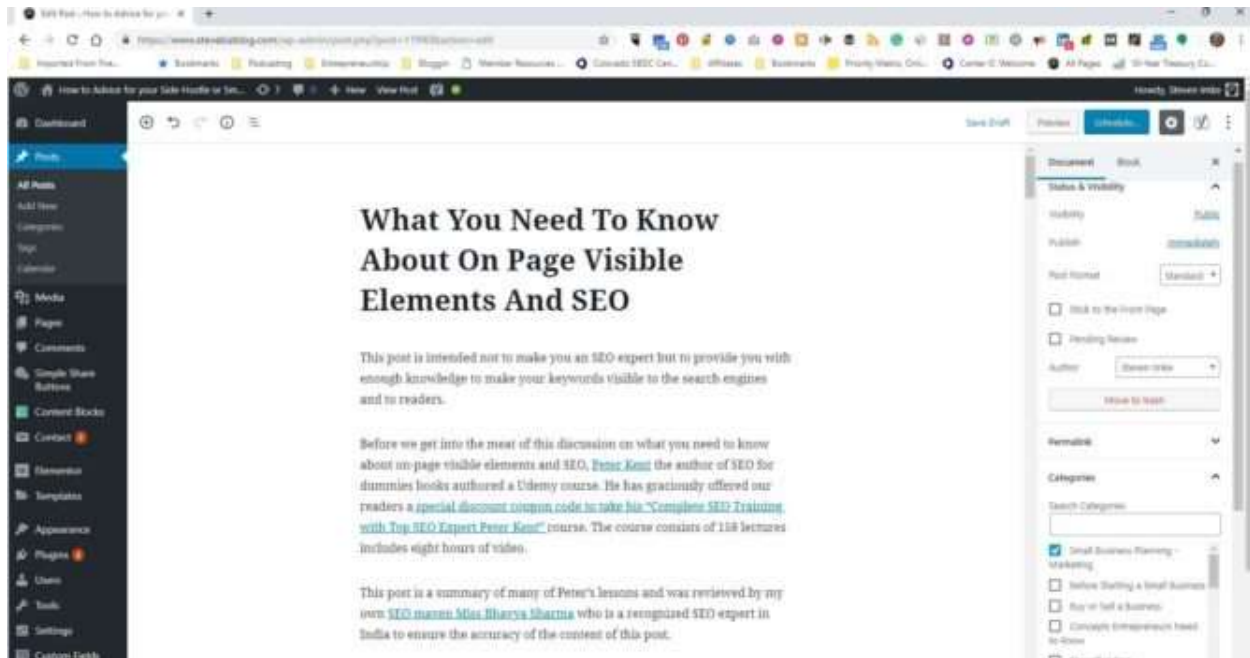
This post is intended not to make you an SEO expert but to provide you with enough knowledge to make your keywords visible to the search engines and to readers. On-page visible elements include headings, images, paragraph text, and other formatting elements. In this post, we will discuss the most important and how they can affect your SEO.

HEADING TAGS – ON-PAGE VISIBLE ELEMENTS

Heading Tags range from <h1> to <h6> and represent a cascading level of content similar to an outline. Headings are one of the primary ways search engine understand that your

page is about. Therefore, it is important to include headings wherever naturally possible. Moreover, using headings allows readers to more easily scan your content. Content with just body text and no headings is less interesting, turns off many readers, and does not tell the search engines what is important.

When keywords are also used in Heading Tags, the search engine knows that it is important. For example, if you want to optimize for "Break-Even" and you are talking about fixes and variable costs rather than just use an <h2> tag with the word "Fixed", using something like "Break-Even: Fixed Cost" will give the search engine a better idea of the context of the relationship between Break-Even and Fixed Cost.

If you hire a web developer, be aware that many web developers rely heavily on using Cascading Style Sheets to format a page. While using Cascading Style Sheets is not a bad thing, it is important to understand that they can be used in ways that do not help you with SEO. Web developers can often produce many pages that look like they have headers, but in fact, do not have any headers for the search engines to understand what are your most important keywords about your page. The process of using Cascading Style Sheets makes the web developer's job easier, but as a business owner, you need to understand if their use of Cascading Style Sheets is at the expense of better SEO.

What I have discovered is that many web developers may say they also do SEO, they are, in fact, not very SEO savvy. When you select a web developer be sure that they are really competent in SEO. Many freelancing platforms like Upwork, the one I use, will administer tests to freelancers so you can see where your potential developer ranks in specific skills. For example, I can easily see that my web developer MissB, scored in the top 20% on her SEO test administered by Upwork.

BODY TEST FORMATING – ON-PAGE VISIBLE ELEMENTS

The body text is where you communicate your message to your target market. This is where you make your argument that the reader should buy your product or service, or respond to your call to action. It is also where the search engines attempt to determine what the page is about by searching for keywords

Everything else like meta tags, your URL, title tags, description, and even headers are just proxy ways that search engines attempt to determine what a post is about. However, the body is why the reader is there in the first place, and therefore the use of keywords in your body text is weighted very highly by search engines.

First and foremost, make your pages easy to read for your audience. As we shared in [How to Write a Sales Page](#) there are Skimmers, Scanners, and Readers, and your text needs to be optimized for each. Here are the five best practices that will make sure that your copy will appeal to all three types of customers.

- Font size should vary and never be smaller than 16pt.
- Use short sentences that are no more than 40 to 80 characters long.
- Start a new paragraph after every three or four sentences.
- Use lots of lists, quotes, and tables to mix up the look.
- Use a new sub-headline for every two to three paragraphs.

When it comes to SEO, words that are bold and in italics not only bring attention to keywords for the readers but are used by search engines to learn what is important in your text. Therefore, you may want to bold or italicize your keywords to bring attention to them for the reader and for search engines, but don't over go it.

Note: According to Matt Cutts of Google, <strong> and <b> for bold are two tags that both make the visible text bold. However, Google does not really treat the tag differently from an SEO perspective.

IMAGES TAGS – ON-PAGE VISIBLE ELEMENTS

ATTACHMENT DETAILS

Man-checking-Social-Media-on-his-laptop.jpg
March 17, 2019
23 KB
310 by 465 pixels
Edit Image
Delete Permanently

URL https://www.stevebizblog.c

Title Man checking Social Media

Caption

Alt Text Man checking Social Media

Description

Smush 6 images reduced by 38.0 B (0.0%)
Image Size: 23.0 KB

View Stats

Images have a Title and an Alt Tag. Alt tags were originally designed to be the text that would appear if a user had their images turned off. The text in the alt tag was the text that would be displayed in the absence of the image. The alt tag text was also the text that would appear if you moused-over the image. However, nearly every user has the ability to display images these days, and few browsers display the alt tag's text if your mouse over the image any more. So, does that mean that the alt tag no longer has any value? To the contrary. Since search engines are currently not very good at searching image content, they use both the title tag and alt tag to understand what the image is about, and how it contributes to the overall understanding of the web page.

Consider a post that has a featured image of a guy sitting at a desk looking at a laptop, and the post is about using Social Media which is what you want the search engine to index your page for. You could enter "Man at Laptop" in the title as an alt tag but, it is far better to use "Man checking Social Media on his laptop". Since the alt tag and title both contain the keyword "Social Media" which is the topic of your post and is one of the keywords you are trying to rank the page for, you give the search engines another clue to go on when indexing your page.

INTERNAL LINKS

Internal links are links that go from one page on a domain to a different page on the same domain. You will want to include internal links to other pages whenever possible so long as the links appear natural because links pass page rankings, or what some call [Link Juice](#), from one page to the other.

The [Anchor Text](#) is the text in your body text that is visible and highlighted for the user to show that it is a hypertext link that will take the reader to another page associated with the link. The words "Anchor Text" in the previous sentence is an example of anchor text. The anchor text is yet another clue that search engines use to determine what the current page is about, and how it relates to other content on your site. Therefore, if possible, your anchor text is best if it is a keyword or at least a semantic equivalent.

For a long time, I always made the anchor text the title of the page I was linking to. While this practice is not bad, it would have often been a better SEO practice if I rewrote the text to include a keyword that I wanted to tell search engines about.

For example, if I had a page with a title of "Generational Behaviors and Attitudes" and I'm writing for a page I'm trying to rank for baby boomers, I could format the body text as follows:

"…in the article on [Generational Behaviors and Attitudes](#) we talk about baby boomers"

The anchor text in this example is the title of the target post "Generational Behaviors and Attitudes". It is better from an SEO perspective to use "baby boomers" as the Anchor text in the body and not the post title. For example:

"…in the article on Generational Behaviors and Attitudes we talk about [baby boomers](#)"

In this case, the anchor text is the same as the keyword that I wanted to rank the current page for.

You absolutely want to avoid the all too common "click here for more information" anchor text, since "click here" is meaningless to the search engine.

Of course, whenever you are including an internal link, you want to make sure that the target page where the link takes the reader is also properly optimized.

Finally, when it comes to internal links, it is better to have a text link where the anchor text is a keyword that you are trying to optimize for than an image link. An image link is where the image can be clicked on to take the reader off the page. A common example is adding a "Buy now" button as a call to action on a page. If you use an image like that, be sure that the title and alt tags, as well as the URL communicate to the search engines what the link is about.

EXPERT TIPS:

Getting some additional common keywords for your website listed on each page can be accomplished with what is known as a "link block". A link block often appears at the bottom of a web page and acts as a site's navigation to other parts of the website. Technically, link blocks are just a bunch of links to other key areas of a site. However, if they contain lots of keywords that you want the site to rank for, they can help with you indexing for these keywords. Consider the following example of a link block used by Peter Kent.

◯— Home	◯— Search Engine Optimization for Dummies	◯— Ecommerce Expert Witness
◯— Peter Kent's Consulting Services	◯— Rodent Engineering	◯— Contact
◯— About Peter Kent	◯— Internet Expert Witness	◯— Sitemap
◯— Kent's Speaking	◯— SEO Expert Witness	

Another expert tip involves adding a "What we do" block of text that can appear at the bottom of all web pages, which is kind of like an email signature file. For example, I use a

WordPress plugin called [Content Blocks](#). It is a place where you can add the same content to any web page by adding a content block that contains many of the overarching keywords that you want the site to rank for. The beauty of using a content block plugin is that you can create several tailored versions with different keywords included in the content, and with a simple drop-down selection, add them to individual web pages of your site. By simply adding a short-code to the content block, you can change the "What we do" text once and it is updated on all pages.

The following content block example is what I used on my web pages to add all my follow me on... links to the bottom of this blog post after my question to the reader.

How will you use your understanding of on page visible elements to improve your SEO?

[/] Shortcode   [ls_content_block id="6399" para="paragraphs-no-shortcodes"]

In this way, each content block can contain text that hits on many keywords, perhaps a dozen or more, that you want your site to rank for. You can also include this paragraph in the footer area of your web pages as well.

WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW ABOUT LINK BUILDING
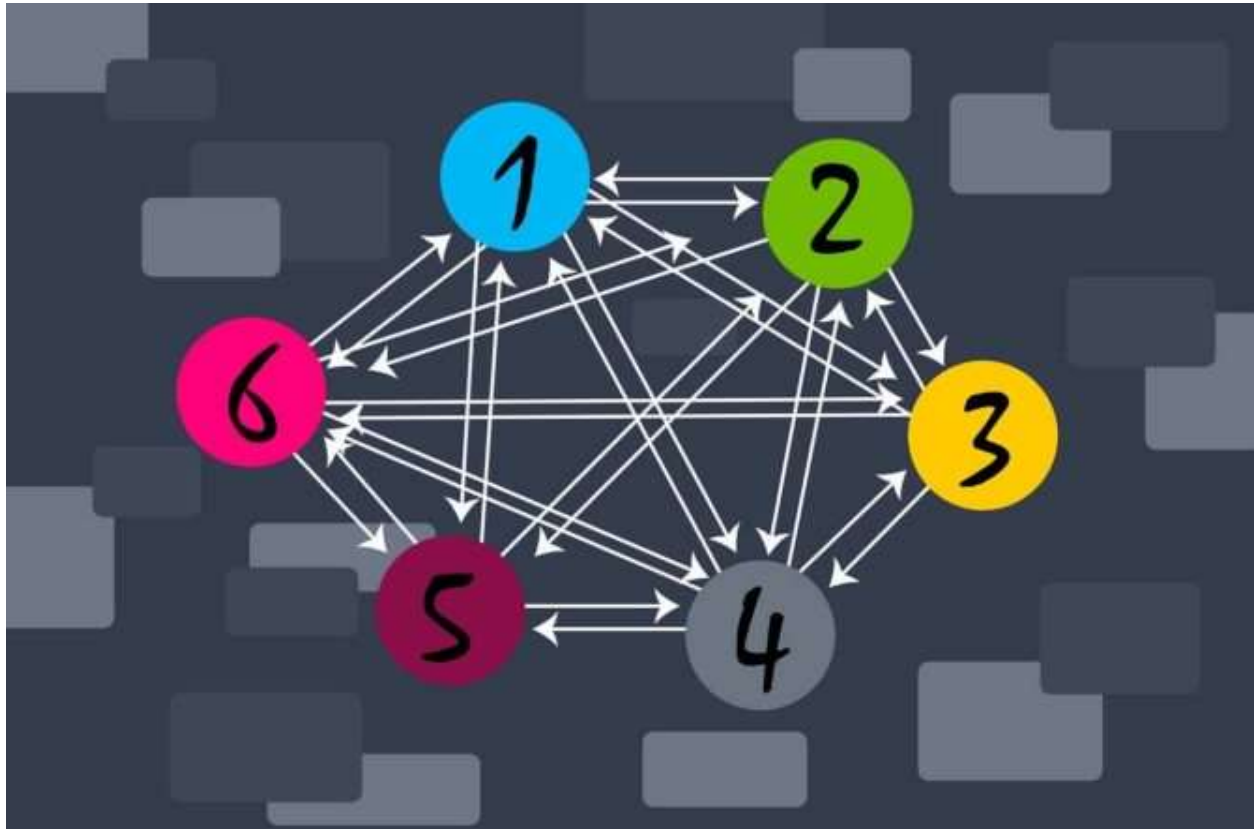
The most important factor in SEO is also the hardest. Getting links, known as a backlink to your pages or your site from other web sites on the internet. The effort to get more quality backlinks to your content is known as link building and is the subject of this post.

Let's face it- SEO is really about internet marketing and more specific traffic. Just as location is important for retail traffic, backlinks are what bring traffic to your web site. You can have a mediocre product or service, and still have a good chance of success with great marketing. However, the same can't be said that if you have a great product or service and only mediocre marketing. Chances are low that without good marketing, you will have much success. Marketing is what drives people to your business. A good product or service

only keeps them coming back. Therefore, without good marketing, you do not have a business.

You can think about all the content of your website as being your store. However, even the best content is worthless if nobody knows about it. If your content is your store, then your marketing are your backlinks.

ON-PAGE SEO VS OFF-PAGE SEO

So far, we have talked about both the hidden elements of SEO and visible elements of SEO, which can be collectively called on-page SEO. **On-page SEO** are all the things that you can do to your website and its pages to allow search engines to find your content. All these on-page efforts are within your control. On–page SEO is like creating a great product. However, off-page SEO is about the marketing part, and that is all about getting backlinks to your website and specific pages. **Backlinks** are the links to your content from other websites and pages, and are for the most part, outside of your direct control. That is why getting backlinks, while being the most important part of SEO, is also the hardest part.

From the perspective of the modern search engine, anyone can say they have a great product (*on-page*) but when others (*off-page*) say it, especially someone whose opinion is well respected (*high page authority or domain authority*), that tells the search engine that the product (*your content*) is, in fact, good and worth sharing in their search results.

HOW BACKLINKS HELP SEO

Backlinks can help your SEO in five ways:

1. Backlinks help the search engine find your site and its content so they can index it.
2. The anchor text in a link help describe the subject of the reference page
3. The number of backlinks to a reference page tells the search engine how important it is. Lots of links= more important. None or just a few links, not so important.

4. The more backlinks, the more frequent the page gets indexed.
5. More backlinks mean more people visit your page, which is the whole reason for SEO in the first place.

However, it is not just the sheer number of backlinks you get to your content that is important, but the quality of those backlinks that carry much of the weight.

PAGE AUTHORITY AND LINK BUILDING

In the eyes of search engines, not all links are created equal. From the perspective of the search engines, some sites have more authority about a subject than other sites. A backlink from a site with a higher page authority is weighted more than one from a page that has a lower authority weighting. In the end, the more backlinks a page has from sites with high authority, the greater the authority a link brings with it. The SEO value of a hyperlink is often referred to as Link Juice.

Note: Vocabulary is often what confuses a lot of people, nowhere more than in analytics and SEO. As a matter of clarification, the authority a page has can go by many different names. Google used to call it "PageRank", Moz calls it "Page Authority", Majestic calls it "Citation Flow", and AHrefs calls it just "Rank". Each platform uses a slightly different algorithm to determine the quality of a page, but for the most part, they use many of the same attributes and weigh things about the same. So don't get confused. While there are lots of names that describe a page's quality, I will use the Moz definition of Page Authority when describing a page's quality score, and a link's juice when I describe the flow of the source page's page authority to the destination page.

The page authority of your backlinks is therefore a significant factor in determining where your content ultimately ranks in a search result. You either show up closer to the top of page one or somewhere on page 100 in the list of pages. Of course, there are other things that the search engine uses to determine the best match for a search result, such as the

keywords used and the size of the page, but page authority is one of the most important factors the search engines use to rank a page.

As a metaphor for page authority, you can think about it as the number of shares a person owns in a business. Some shareholders may control many shares of stock in a business, while others may only control a few shares. When a site with a high page authority votes by linking to your content, they have a larger number of shares to vote with, which is their link juice.

PASSING LINK JUICE WHEN LINK BUILDING

It is important to note that when a site with a high page authority has many outbound links in a single piece of content, say links to ten other pages, such as you might see on a page with a list of companies, the link juice they pass along with each backlink is a percentage of its total page's authority. If there were ten links in one particular page, the link juice each outbound link would receive is diluted. Each link would receive link juice equal to about one-tenth of the page's page authority. If, on the other hand, there was only one link, that link would receive 100% of the page's page authority as its link juice.

Just to be clear, when a source page links out to other destination pages, it shares its page authority as link juice. The process of including links to other pages does not cause the source page to lose any of its own page authority for doing so, however, the link juice it passes helps to enhance the value of the destination page identified in the hyperlink.

Additionally, it should be noted that link juice can be passed along to both internal and external pages. Therefore, if you have a source page with a high page authority on your own site and you have a link on that page to another destination page on your site, you can pass along the source page's link juice to the destination page. In another example, when you include one external link and one internal link in a piece of content, your internal link gets only half of the link juice from the source page's page authority and the external link gets the other half.

TRUST SCORE AND LINK BUILDING

At some point, some sites began to use what are often referred to as **Black Hat**SEO tactics to try to manipulate page authority and the passing of link juice, so search engines came up with a trust or spam score. Black Hat SEO is a practice that tries to manipulate search engine ranking in an effort to achieve higher unearned results. Of course, the opposite of Black Hat is White Hat which is what we are discussing here.

To counter the effects of Black Hat efforts, search engines defined a collection of a few very trusted sites they knew didn't engage in any Black Hat SEO. From this list of less than 200 seed sites, as they were called, the search engines followed all the outgoing links. The fewer the number of links it took from one of these trusted sites to our site, the better the trust score your site receives. While Google does not publish its trust score, Moz displays what they call a site's Spam Score, which is essentially the opposite of a trust score, along with a site's domain and page authority, while Majestic calls them Trust Flow. Whatever they call it, search engines also consider the trustworthiness of the source site in addition to its page authority when allocating its link juice.
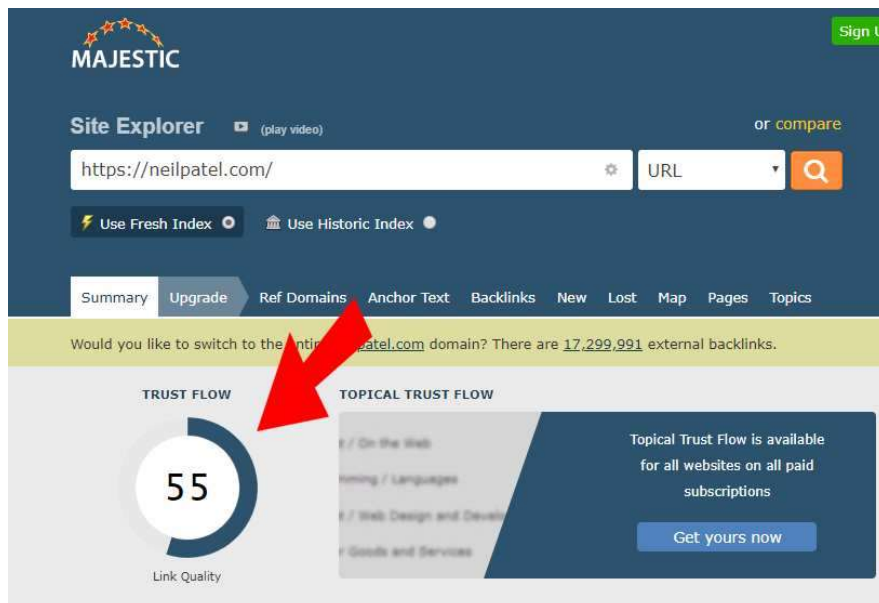
The image to the left shows the Trust Flow as computed by Majestic for Neal Patel a recognized expert in SEO.

So, what helps you get a high trust score? The answer is links from media sites, colleges and universities, and government sites, as well

as other highly respected sites closely tied to the seed sites that have been identified as highly trusted sites.

NO FOLLOW

No Follow is a relationship attribute that can be assigned to any link. A No Follow indicates that the current document's original author or publisher does not endorse the referenced document. A No Follow may be included primarily because of a commercial relationship between people affiliated with the two pages.

The need for no follow came about when blogs were being spammed by people writing comments and including a link back to their website in their comments. While a no follow does not prevent the reader from clicking the link and being taken to the destination page, it does serve to tell the search engine not to value the link in their ranking. So when a link includes the relationship attribute "No follow", no Juice or Trust Score is passed along with the link.

As of this writing, many sites have added the no follow to their links. For example, many links in news articles, as well as links in social media, are no follow links. In fact, question and answer sites like Reddit and Quora treat all links as no follow as well.

However, that does not mean that getting links from news sites, social media sites or posting links to your own content on Q&A sites has no value. It just means that the value they produce is more indirect and gained through increased traffic, or from a reader seeing a link and following it to your page.

Let's not forget the big picture when it comes to SEO. Your goal is to get more visitors to your page. SEO is just one way to get visitors to your page by getting your pages ranked higher. and therefore, closer to the top of the search results. The hope of any SEO effort is that having quality backlinks helps that page appears on page one of a search engine search results so that readers ultimately link back to your content. Even if you get a no follow link

on a news article or social media platform and the reader clicks on the link that takes them to your page, you are a winner.

In the end, many business owners can place too much emphasis on a follow link and forget the higher-level goal of getting visits to their site.

WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW ABOUT A BACKLINK AND SEO
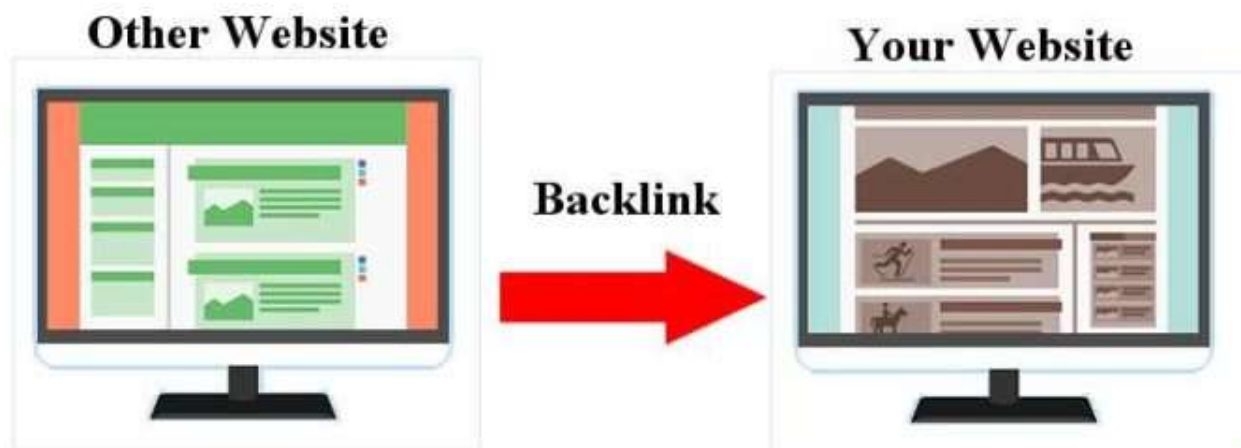
What makes a good backlink? The answer includes relevance, diversity, location on the page, keyword usage and placement. While you can't directly control your off-page SEO, it is important to understand how the construction of the backlink affects how search engines view you as the link destination.

BACKLINK RELEVANCE FOR SEO

It is often said that you need relevant inbound links…but what is relevance?

Relevance has a lot to do with industry alignment. Let's say that you had a website about lawn care and you got a backlink from Scotts-the manufacturer of lawn food-to a page on your website. From an SEO perspective, that is a good link since there is a strong industry alignment.

Now let's say that you got a backlink from Home Depot, an even larger overall site with an even a higher Domain Authority than Scotts. Would that link be a better backlink? Or since Home Depot is only remotely connected to the lawn care industry, is this a less valuable link? The answer is – it depends.

Because Home Depot has more [link juice](#) than Scotts, based on its higher Domain Authority it has more link juice to give. However, Scotts is a more relevant link since it shares the same industry, so the link has greater relevance than Home Depot. In this case, the ultimate value of these two links will depend on both the formatting and type of link.

TEXT OR IMAGE LINKS FOR SEO

Search engines value text links over image links. Text links with a more descriptive anchor text also have greater value. Therefore, if the backlink from Scotts was an image link as opposed to a text link, and the Home Depot backlink was a text link with a well-scripted anchor text, the nod would go to the Home Depot link as being better.

However, if the inverse was true in that Scotts used a text link with a well-scripted anchor text and Home Depot used an image link, the nod would likely go to Scotts.

If both backlinks were formatted the same as either text links or image links, then the increased relevance of Scotts might just make up for the additional Domain Authority possessed by Home Depot.

DIVERSITY OF BACKLINKS FOR SEO

A dozen backlinks to your site from one domain are not valued as highly by search engines as one link from a dozen different domains.

Inbound links from sites that have a higher Domain and Page Authority, as we shared earlier, pass along more link juice than an inbound link from a site that has lower authority. This is true even if they come from your own site. Therefore, when a search engine sees many different domains linking to the same content, they value the destination page as having more value. They also reward the page with a higher Page Authority.

POSITION OF A BACKLINK ON THE PAGE FOR SEO

The position on the page where the backlink originated from can impact its value, based on what the search engines call prominence. Often, search engines place a little more value on a link that appears earlier on in an article, than one that appears near the end or in the footer.

KEYWORD PLACEMENT IN ANCHOR TEXT FOR SEO

The location of the keyword in the anchor text of a link has an effect on assigning a value to it. Let's say that you were trying to rank for "Buyer's Utility Map" and for "Map Tool", and you used a text link that linked to a tool that you referred to as your "Buyer's Utility Map Tool" in your copy.
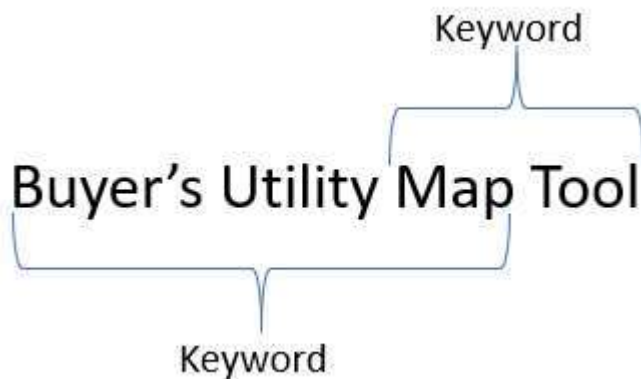
The search engine would apply more value to the keyword "Buyer's Utility Map" based on this prominence, or the fact that it appeared before the keyword "Map Tool". To make the search engines give more prominence to the "Map Tool" keyword, you would be better off making the anchor text "Map Tool: Buyer's Utility Map", or just making "Map Tool" the anchor text.

LINK PLACEMENT ON PAGE FOR SEO

When it comes to the value of a link, its location on the page provides some valuable clues to the search engines. When the link appears in the body text of a page, the search engines assume that it is directly connected to the content of the page. However, if the link appears in a sidebar or in the navigation, they may assume that the link is not as valuable since many sites sell backlinks or include affiliate links in sidebars.

NON-VISIBLE LINKS

An old [black-hat](#) trick that all search engines are wise to and will penalize a site for using is the use of non-visible links. Some developers would try the game the search engines by including links where the anchor text was in the same color as the background, therefore making them non-visible to the user but creating a backlink to another page to share link juice. Today, search engines are wise to this black-hat tactic, and when they are discovered they will penalize the site.

# LINKS TO HOME PAGE OR LANDING PAGE FOR SEO

The home page is the default landing page when someone enters your domain.com. Many backlinks tend to be more generic and include a site's homepage as the link. Search engines know this, so they do not value this as highly as a link to a specific landing page. When a backlink specifies a specific landing page on a site, the search engines interpret that as a more relevant link and value it more highly.

THE PERFECT LINK

While it is not possible to have a perfect link, here is a quick summary of the kind of backlinks you want:

- Links from high authority sites
- Links from high trust/low spam rated sites
- Fewer no-follow links so you can get their link juice
- Follow links from pages with few other links so you get all their juice
- Text links over image links
- Links that are in the body text and not in sidebars or navigation
- Links that come from closer to the top of the originator's page
- Your keywords at the front of the anchor text
- Links from relevant sites
- Links from a distribution of different type of sites
- Visible links
- Links that point to pages and not always to your home page

WHERE CAN I GET BACKLINKS TO IMPROVE SEO?
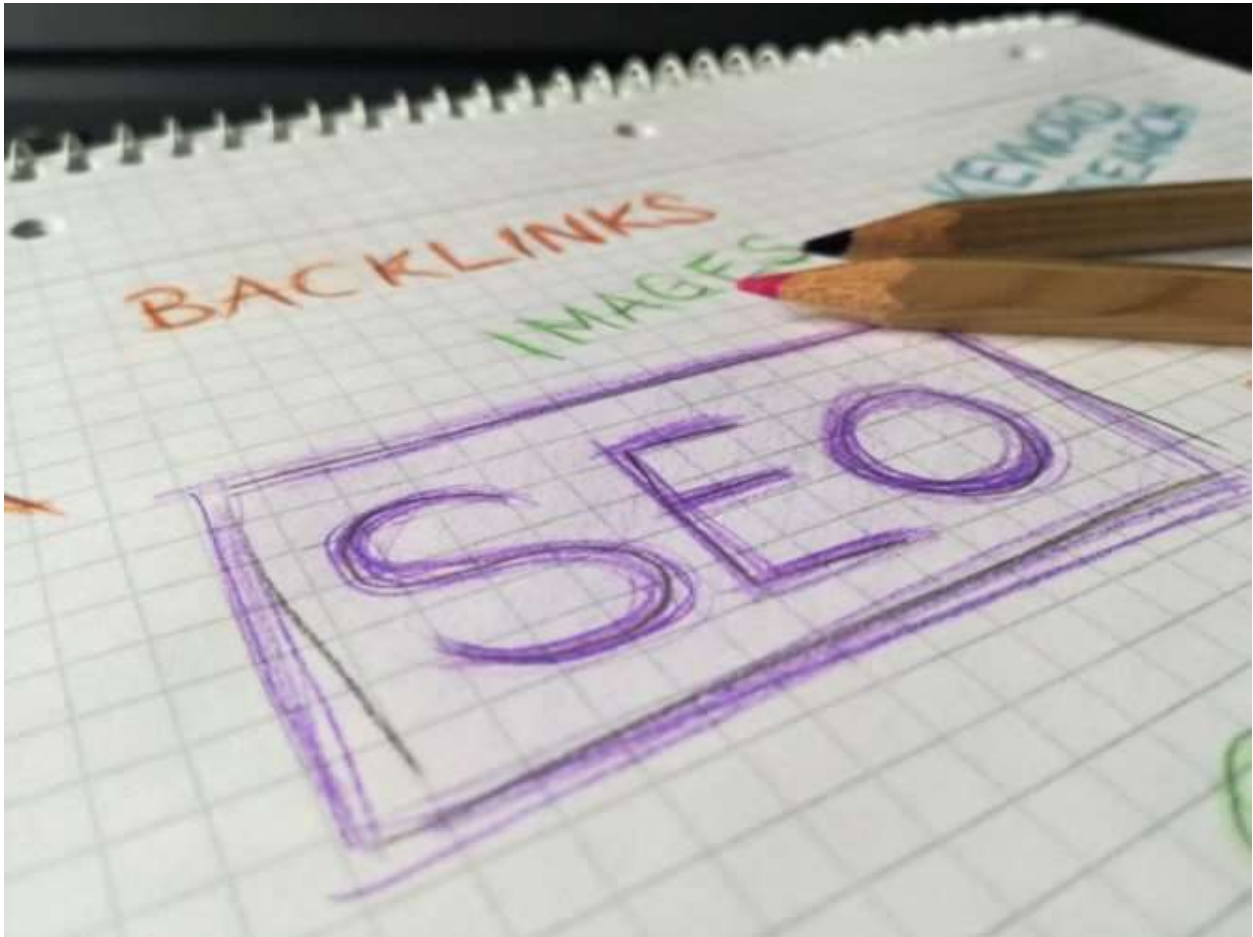
While [you can't directly control your off-page SEO](#), getting backlinks can be a stumbling block for many small business owners. In this post, we will look at six easy backlink sources, and six more ways to get quality backlinks to your content.

6 EASY BACKLINK SOURCES

There are six sources of low hanging backlinks. While they may not be the highest quality links, everything helps- especially when you are just starting out.

1- LINK FROM ANOTHER SITE YOU OWN

If you own more than one domain, make sure that you get backlinks from each site you own to the other sites that you own.

2- BACKLINKS FROM YOUR FRIENDS SOCIAL MEDIA

Get backlinks from friends and family on social media. Even though links from social media are [nofollow links](), the traffic that you generate can improve your site traffic and could produce indirect benefits that will create follow links down the road.

3- POST SWAPS

Find other bloggers in your niche and see if you can swap posts with them with attribution of course. It is always best if the links appear high up on the page, which is why some of my guest bloggers are recognized before we delve into the content of the post.

Some SEO experts will warn you that search engines don't like duplicate content. While duplicate content can be a problem, it is really not always that bad. After all, how many product descriptions have you seen on Amazon that are exactly the same? Sometimes, you may also have the same content but with different cities mentioned. In this example, 99% of the content is exactly the same, with only the city and perhaps an image being different. Moreover, press release and articles can frequently appear on different news sites.

There exists a [canonical tag]() to identify the source of the content. However, it is not required. In the absence of this tag, a search engine like Google will identify the best version or URL. If another site is using your content, you will want to include it so that Google knows you are the originator and give you credit for it.

4- SUBMIT URL TO DIRECTORIES

Submit your website's URL to specific directories in your niche. Backlinks from directories

are not valued very highly by search engines, so I would only focus on directories that do not charge you to get listed.

5- LINKS FROM SUPPLIERS AND CUSTOMERS

Reach out to your suppliers and customers in your value chain and ask them for a linkback on their website.

6- TRADE ASSOCIATION LINKS

Join a [trade association](#) and get listed on their website.

SOLICIT LINKS FROM OTHER SITES

Aside from the six easier backlink sources above, you can do a link analysis of your completion to see where their links are coming from. There are many tools that can help you find a competitor's backlinks such as Majestic, Moz, SEMRush, Ahres, and many more.

Majestic is reported to have the largest database. In fact, a free account allows you to analyze your own site for backlinks. However, the free account only provides a little bit of useful information, and you have to subscribe to their paid account to get a deeper analysis.

I personally like to use [Moz Link Explorer](#) because they offer a pretty good free version. Their free version will give you 10 free searches a month, and allow you to export a large majority of the highest-ranked links to a CSV file. Of course, the free version of Moz Link Explorer is not for professional SEO types, as they prefer the more robust tools. However, for the small business owner on a budget trying to find which sites they might approach to get links from, for the price of free, Moz gets my vote

Brian Dean of [Backlinko.com](#) is a recognized expert in getting backlinks. In a recent [video on link building](#), he provided eleven ideas to generate backlinks. The following is a

summary of seven of his ideas that you can do without subscribing to any expensive SEO tools.

7- MINE LINK ROUNDUPS FOR BACKLINKS

Many sites curate articles for an industry and publish periodic posts that summarize content from other sources and provide a backlink to the original article.

My Monday #PickOfTheWeek post reviews the four best articles that I have read during the past week, as they relate to my niche of side-hustle and lifestyle businesses.

On the flip side, a site like Paper.li that has a great Domain Authority and Page Authority feature many of my posts on their site as part of their roundup.
You can find roundup sites by using a keyword that describes your niche and add "Roundup", "Best of", "Pick of" of "This week".

When you find a site that is in your niche, you can often send the owner an email like the following:

> *Hi [site owner],*
> *I just discovered your [roundup name] today. Pretty cool stuff. I'm reaching out because I recently published a post about [topic of post] that might be a great fit [URL to your content]. Keep up the awesome job!*
> *Regards,*

8- REPORT BROKEN LINKS FOR RECIPROCITY AND A BACKLINK

Find a website with a resource page or some list content you would love a backlink from.

Browse a few pages with links and look for broken links. To find broken links, you will need to enter a domain or landing page into a broken link checker. You can find them with a Google search "Broken Link Checker", or add the "CheckMyLinks" extension to a Chrome browser.

If you find a broken link, send the owner an email like:

> *Hi [site owner]*
> *I was searching [fill in the blank] and came across your checklist. Pretty cool stuff. I liked [fill in the blank] However I did find a broken link. Would you like me to share? Regards,*

When they reply, send a reply back:

> *Hi [site owner]*
> *As I said the post is pretty cool. I wouldn't change anything [or add a recommendation] except for the broken link [provide title and the URL to broken link]. It would be awesome if you would consider mentioning my [fill in the blank] in your post [provide URL to the page with the broken link]. It might be a nice addition to the [fill in the blank] section.*
> *Regards,*

9- BUILD BACKLINKS FROM PODCAST APPEARANCES

Many podcasters are looking for guests that have some type of domain experience. You can search "Podcasts" followed by the keyword for your niche to find lists of podcasters you can reach out to and let them know you are available as a guest.

You can also go out to popular podcast sites like iTunes and Stitcher and search for a podcast in your niche.

PodcastGuest is a free site that matches podcasters with guests.

10- CREATE BRANDED STRATEGIES AND METHODS FOR BACKLINKS

Tools and how-to content are great ways to get backlinks. To up the game, don't just write a post, create a tool or a process and hope people will find it. [Give it a name](#) and [create a logo](#) for it too. Then in a post that you can publish on an external site, say something like:

> *Hi [site owner]*
> *I have a tool I called [insert the name you gave it] or I have a process that I called*
> *[insert name of process] your readers may find interesting.*
> *Regards,*

For example, I have a model that I call the [Viable Customer Model](#) and discuss it in a video. Creating a tool or process and giving it a name is what is known as [link bait](#), and it works wonders for getting backlinks.

Coschedule offers a [Headline Analyzer](#) and Neal Patel offers [Ubersuggest](#). These are both tools that I personally use often and are cited by many articles and posts.

11- BECOME A SOURCE FOR REPORTERS AND BLOGGERS

Reporters are always looking for experts to cite in their stories. Help A Reporter Out or [HARO](#) is a website that matches journalists with expert resources. Being a HARO source takes some work and you have to respond pretty fast to a request. However, you can get some really quality backlinks from news sites with very high domain authority if they provide a follow link citing you as the source.

Even if they include a [nofollow link](#), your link is placed in front of their audience. If you register as a HARO source, you will get three emails a day. Respond to them with your pitch and if accepted, the journalist will cite you as a contributor.

I discussed ways to help [locate reporters](#) using HARO, as well as three other similar sites in our post about finding Crowdfunding influencers.

Related: [Digital Marketing Underdogs: Quora and HARO [Case Study]](#)

12- COLLEGE/UNIVERSITY RESOURCE PAGE LINK BUILDING

Backlinks from colleges and universities are ranked high by search engines. Most .edu sites have a resource page for their students. Moreover, many also have clubs that list local resources. [Search operators](#) are ways to tell a search engine like Google to narrow the focus of a query. Using a search operator, you can find colleges and universities by using the "Site:" search operator followed by ".edu" to restrict the search to only sites with the .edu extension. Then you can add your keyword for your niche. For example:

Site:.edu "veteran services"

Follow the links to these college and university sites to see if any of them would benefit by linking to some of your content. If you have content, send the person that runs the page an email that says something like:

> *Hi [site owner]*
> *I was doing an internet search about [fill in the blank] and came across your resource page. I want to say that the page helped me a lot. I would never have found [resource link] without it.*
> *Ironically, I recently published a paper on [fill in the blank] recently. It [provide a brief description]. In case you would like to check it out, here is the [provide URL to your content].*
> *Also, after looking at the resources on your page, my paper might make a nice addition to your page. Either way, thanks for putting together the list of resource.*
> *Regards,*

In reality only 1 in 20 will add your link, but the value is very good from just a single link.

HOW TO FIND THE BEST PERFORMING KEYWORDS AND RANK HIGHER IN SERP

Google Search Console

After researching and writing a few articles on finding your powerful keywords and SEO, one question that was not clearly addressed was how to improve organic search results for a business that already exists, but has an under-performing website.

The ugly truth is that while many small businesses, including mine, for years had been set up to collect analytics data, few of us really spent much time trying to really understand how to interpret the data in a meaningful way. Just like with many SEO related topics, most business owners get overwhelmed and never spend much time examining the data. For most business owners, while getting insights from their analytics is important, it is not viewed as urgent and time sensitive, and therefore many business owners choose instead to just deal with today's most pressing business issues and put off examining their analytics for a day that never comes.

If that describes you, you are not alone. However, today might be that day to discover the secret to getting more traffic with a relatively simple step-by-step process.

In this post, we'll look at how you can find the keywords that search engines use to rank for your best-performing pages. With this knowledge, you will know which keywords to address to improve the position of your page in the Search Engines Results Page (SERP).

Clearly, Google is the largest search engine and it provides a host of free tools to analyze traffic. That being said, the assumption is that you – like so many existing businesses – already have Google Analytics set up, but are not using it very effectively. However, if you do not already have Google analytics set up, here is a link to discover how to get started with Google Analytics.

Although Google Analytics as a tool is pretty powerful -in that it provides you information on how users interact with your site- we need a different kind of data. Rather than focus on the activities of the user, we need to look in the opposite direction towards the search engines. For that, we will need to use another free Google tool called the Google Search Console – also known as Google Webmaster.

> "While **Google Analytics** provides you information on how **users** interact with your site."

> "**Google Search Console** provides insights on how **search engines** interact with your site."

To set up the Google Search Console you need an existing Google Analytics account where you can point to a specific property such as your website, app, or blog. To set up the Google Search Console, you can use the following link to the Google Search Console help page to get Google Search Console connected to your Google Analytics property.

As part of my research for this article, I also came across Surfside PPC, which provided a YouTube video that does a pretty good job describing how to use Google Search Console. In fact, much of this post was gleaned from that video and discussions with my own webmaster MissB, who also reviewed this post for accuracy.

To discover your best-performing pages and see your average position based on the keywords a user enters into a search query, you will want to use the Google Search Console tool.

After you log in to your Google Search Console, you will see a Performance tab along the left menu.
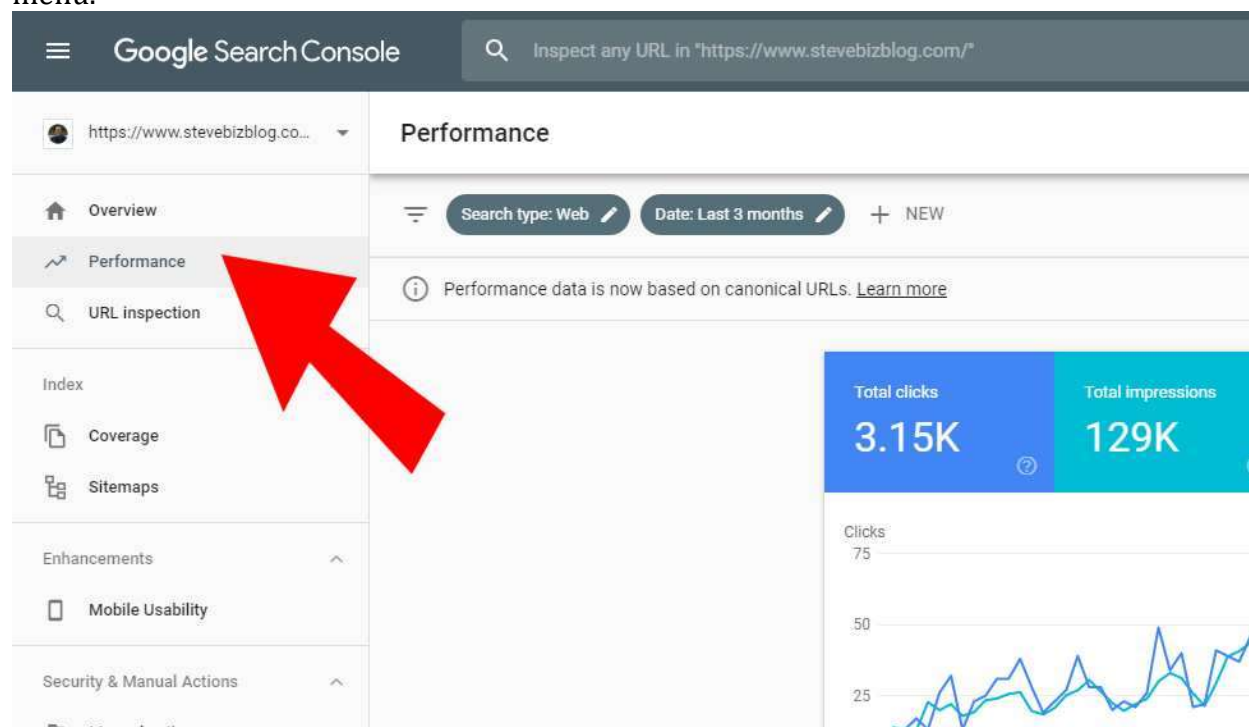
FIND BEST PERFORMING KEYWORDS

After selecting the Performance tab at the top, you will see four blocks labeled Total Click, Total Impressions, Average CTR, and Average Position. By default, only Total Clicks and Total Impressions are selected. By selecting the other two blocks, while it makes the graph

look messy, you need to select them to add Clicks and Position to the table below the chart, which is how we will find the best keywords the search engines have for your current site.
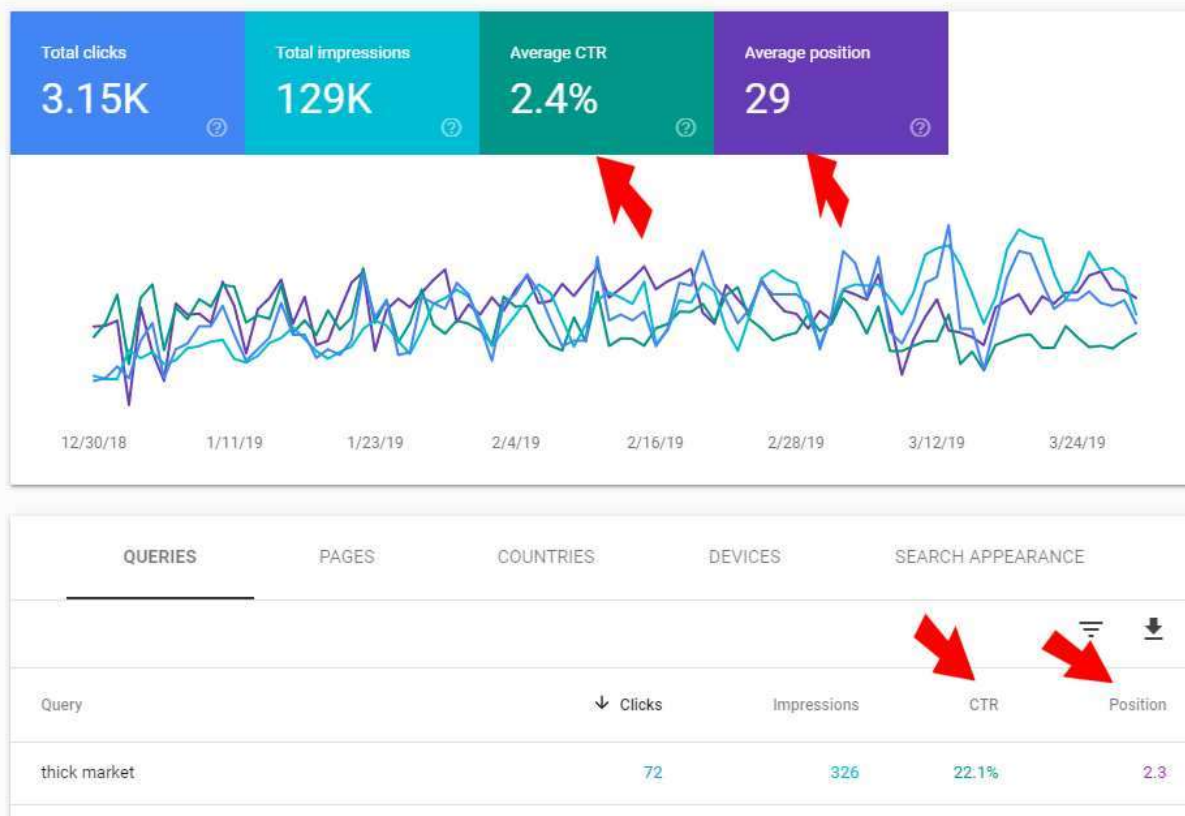
The default sort in the search table is based on Queries. Queries are the keywords that Google ranks your site for. The default results are sorted by the number of clicks that each specific keyword has received. While the keywords that generate the most click-throughs to your site is interesting information, at this point we need to know what pages are performing best so that you know where you need to place some attention to get those pages ranked even higher on the SERP.

According to SmartInsights only the top few organic search positions get you any kind of click-through traffic. When your position is outside the first five positions, rates drop to near zero. Therefore, it is important to try to get a position above the fold (the initial display without needing to scroll the page) on a desktop search.

Organic Click Thru Rate by Search Position
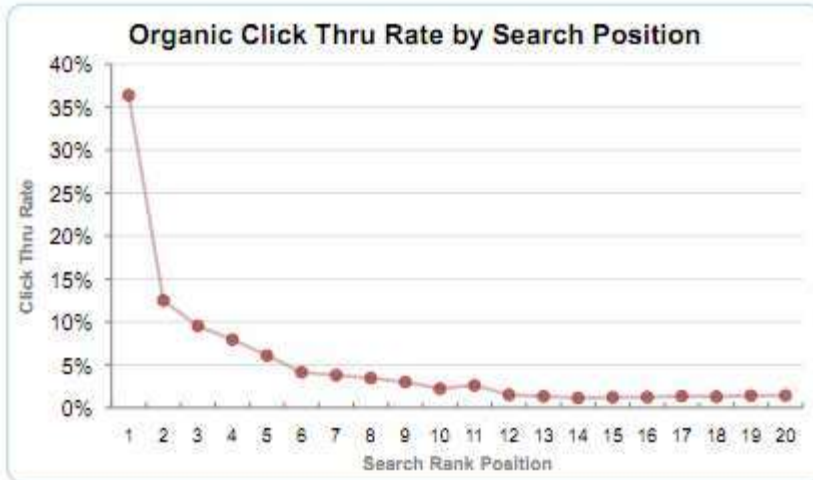
FIND YOUR BEST PERFORMING PAGES

While your best ranking keywords are interesting, we need to know what pages are just below the fold in position, yet are receiving a good amount of impressions to justify your efforts to improve the page's SEO. To do that you need to click on the Pages tab in the table.

Page	↓ Clicks	Impressions	CTR	Position
https://www.stevebizblog.com/the-5-categories-of-adopters/	279	8,663	3.2%	8.5
https://www.stevebizblog.com/thick-market-vs-thin-market/	180	1,914	9.4%	11.2
https://www.stevebizblog.com/how-to-get-paid-as-a-general-partner-of-limited-partnership/	137	1,471	9.3%	25.5
https://www.stevebizblog.com/types-of-business-purchases/	105	919	11.4%	10.1
https://www.stevebizblog.com/how-to-get-paid-as-a-limited-partner-of-limited-partnership/	101	1,388	7.3%	21.6
https://www.stevebizblog.com/what-is-the-market-structure/	100	2,794	3.6%	14.2

As you can see in the example, the default results are based on clicks. My best page in the past three months relates to a post I did on the category of adopters. It appeared in 8,662

search results and got 279 click-throughs to that page. It also shows that we had an average position of 8.5 in the search results. As we discussed, while this page is getting an okay number of clicks, imagine how many more clicks we would get if we could improve our average position by just a couple of more spots and appear above the fold and appear in the top five positions on the SERP.
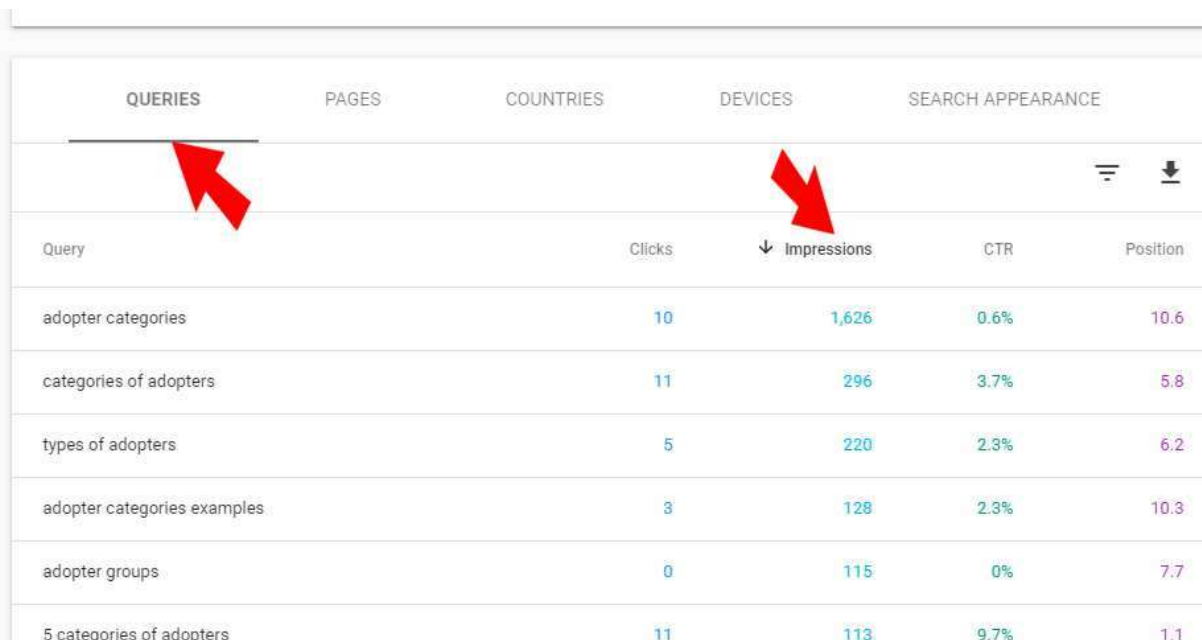
To examine this page in more detail, we need to add the page to the filter. To do that, click on the link so we can drill down and get more information on the page.
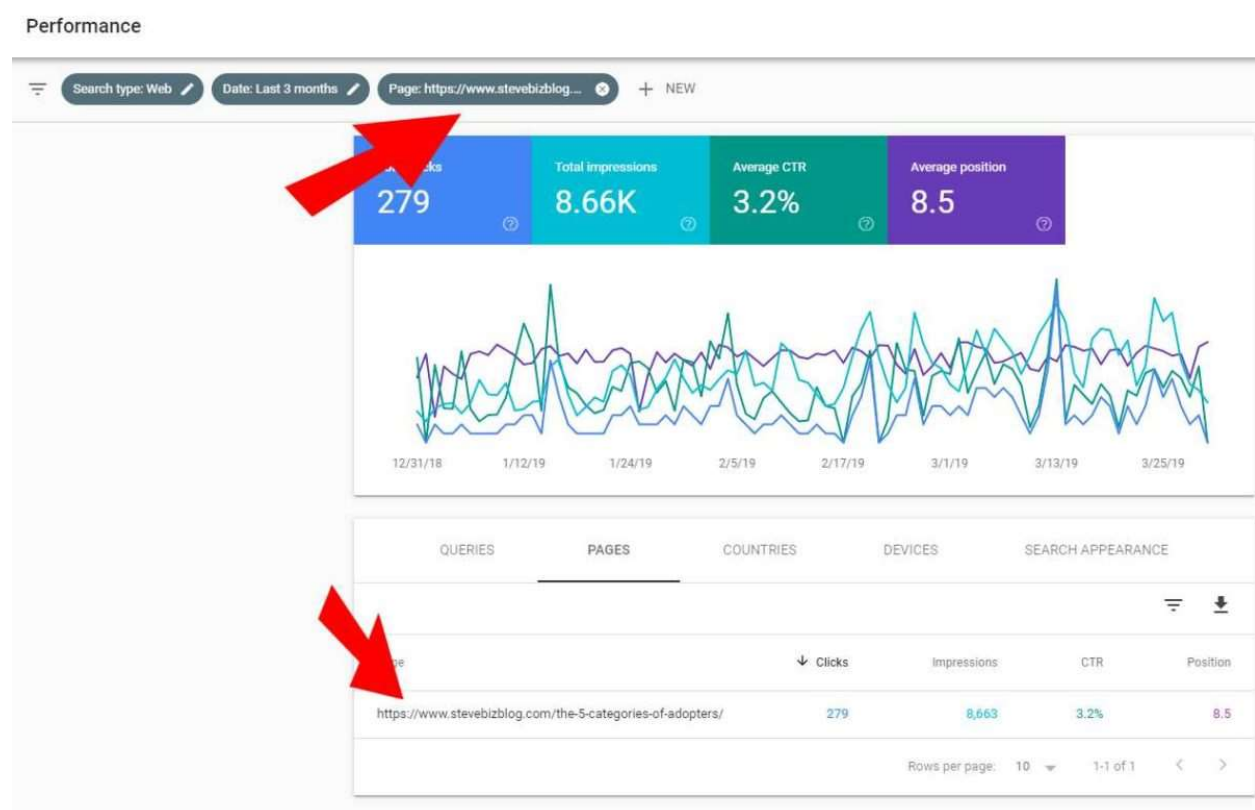
FIND YOUR BEST PERFORMING KEYWORDS FOR A PAGE

Since several different long-tail keywords drive traffic to this page, next we want to see the keywords that were used in a search that resulted in our traffic. With Google Search Console, we can see which keywords are working well and which ones we can work on to

improve our future position. Since this page is now part of our filter, to find out the best keywords to optimize this page for we need to open the Queries tab in the table and sort by Impressions. Impressions are when a page appeared in a user's search result.

Query	Clicks	↓ Impressions	CTR	Position
adopter categories	10	1,626	0.6%	10.6
categories of adopters	11	296	3.7%	5.8
types of adopters	5	220	2.3%	6.2
adopter categories examples	3	128	2.3%	10.3
adopter groups	0	115	0%	7.7
5 categories of adopters	11	113	9.7%	1.1
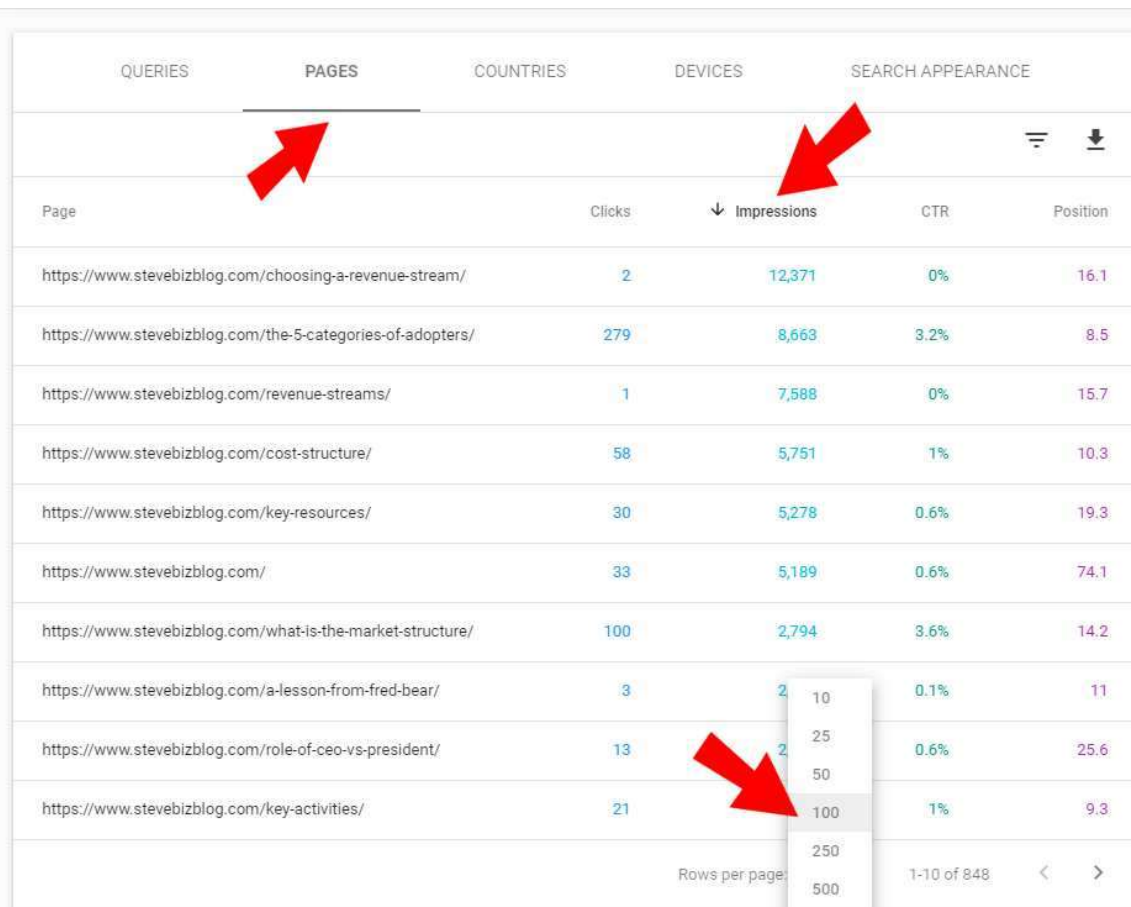
As you can see, "adopter categories" got 1,626 impressions and for that keyword we were located in the 10.6 average position. Therefore, we have a pretty clear task to optimize this page by adding the keyword "adopter categories" in an attempt to improve this page's search position in various search engines. While the next keyword "category of adopters" has a higher position, it has significantly fewer impressions. Therefore, the best use of our time is to focus on keywords with a greater number of impressions that still have a decent position.

To improve the SEO of this page around our keyword, we will want to edit the page and look for ways to incorporate the keyword into our content. For example, we might want to use a few On-Page Visible Elements to improve the page's SEO such as adding a few additional occurrences of the keyword "adopter categories" in the body text, header tags, and using the keyword in bolded and italic text, as well as adding backlinks to this page from other pages we control using the keyword as the anchor text. We will also want to

consider using a few On-Page But Hidden Techniques to improve SEO, such as adding the keyword to our Description tags.

FIND YOUR PAGES WITH THE MOST IMPRESSIONS

Now that we know how to optimize a specific page, you should focus on other pages that get a lot of impressions and where your average position is not too far from the fold. To do that, you first need to remove the specific page from the filtered results so that we are left with data for your entire property or sites like the view we get when we just log into Google Search Console. Next, you will want to click on the Pages tab in the table and sort by Impressions. You may also want to change the Rows per page from the default of ten to 100 to get more results.

FIND YOUR BEST PERFORMING KEYWORDS THAT DRIVE THE MOST IMPRESSIONS

As you can see the page about choosing a revenue stream had 12,371 impressions but only received two clicks. By adding the page to our filter (select the page from our table), then clicking on the Queries tab in the table, and finally sorting by Impressions, we can see that our best keyword in terms of impressions was "revenue streams". However, since it is located in the average position of 16.7, we have a lot of work to do to try to rank for this keyword. It is also the clear reason that we only received two clicks on 12,371 impressions.

For some pages, you will discover that the effort to get an above the fold ranking where you will have the best chances to get a click-through, may require too much effort. While there is no specific formula, you will generally want to focus on pages where you are already getting some click-throughs and may be able to rank in the top few positions once you optimize a page.

What I find helpful is to open a new tab in my browser and enter the keyword into Google. Then I assess the pages and domains that rank between my current position and the top results.

FIND COMPETITORS AUTHORITY

You can explore the strengths of the other positions by using a tool like Website Authority Checker and entering the URL of higher ranking pages to view their Page Authority (PA) and Domain Authority (DA) compared to yours. If the numbers are pretty close to yours, you stand a good chance of being able to leapfrog that position with a well-optimized page. If the competition has a significantly higher PA and DA, the task may prove much more difficult. Your goal should be to find keywords where you can leapfrog a few positions and get your page to appear above the fold.

REINDEXING A PAGE

Finally, when you are done editing a page to improve its SEO, you can use the Google Search Console to tell Google that you want it to re-index the page. To do that, you want to copy the URL of the page you edited and select the "URL Inspection" in the left sidebar menu. After you click on URL Inspection, you will be prompted to enter the page's URL so now we can paste the URL into the field and hit return.
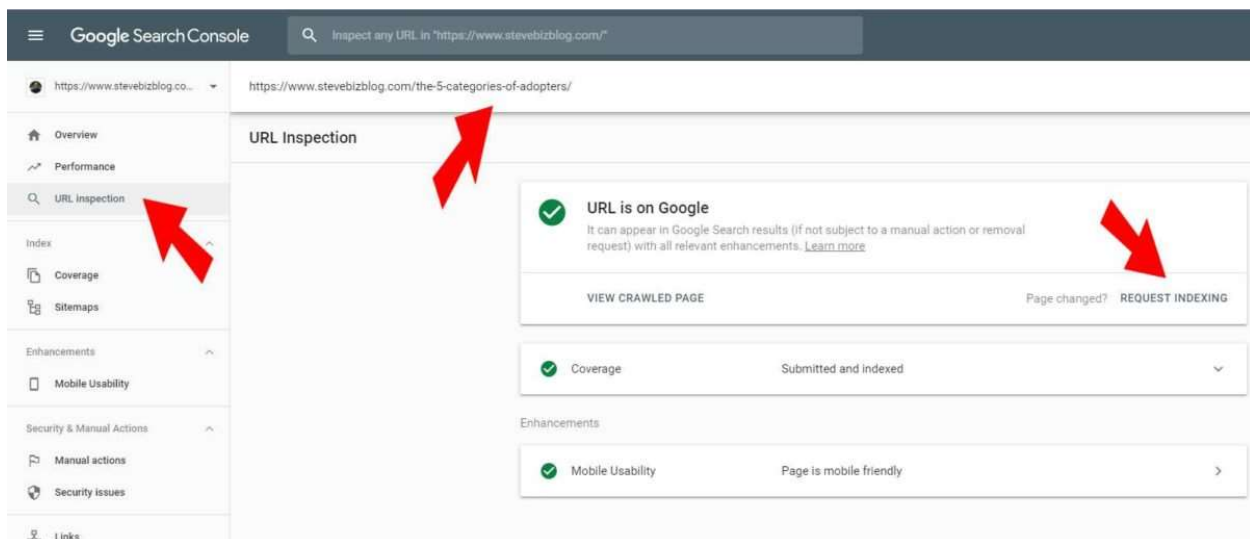
You should be presented with a page with green check marks provided there are no errors. To request Google to crawl your page to re-index it, you can click on "REQUEST INDEXING".

It will take several minutes for Google to validate the request and place you in the queue to get the page re-indexed.

HOW YOUR SEO ACTIONS EXPOSE YOU AS A CHEATER OR A STAR

Search engines are always in a battle with developers attempting to hack their algorithms using black-hat SEO techniques. This is especially true when it comes to getting backlinks to improve a website's authority. Therefore, search engines are wise to a bunch of tactics and will penalize a site if they can tell that you are into building links through purchases and not including ads. vs through more organic means.

Remember – search engines are in the business of returning search results based on a searcher's desire for information. If results appear in a query that are not relevant to the

searcher's intent, it looks bad for the search engine. Therefore, search engines like Google have adopted a series of practices to try to detect if the search results will be more relevant to the searcher's desires through the use of determining if links appear to conform to the laws of more natural link usage.

Here are six things that you should avoid doing or risk tipping off search engines that your linking practice is not a natural one.

– GROWING LINKS TOO FAST

Many SEO companies say they will submit your site to 250 directories. When this happens, there is often a spike in links back to your site. While it is very possible that you just produced a piece of content that went viral, search engines often monitor this activity and may see that you are attempting to buy your ranking as opposed to earning it organically. To that end, many of these services offering to submit your business to various directories are now advertising that they will submit your site to these directories over an extended period of time, thereby attempting to avoid this activity being detection by search engines.

– ALL LINKS CONTAIN SAME ANCHOR TEXT

Another way that search engines detect that a link is not natural is if all of them use the same anchor text. Companies that offer to provide a number of backlinks will often just copy and paste the same text link over and over on different sites. Naturally occurring links will have varied anchor text.

– ALL LINKS CONTAIN YOUR KEYWORDS

When all of your links contain the keywords that you are trying to rank for, it looks to the search engine that links are placed in content just for the sake of ranking your content for

the keywords. When some links do not contain a keyword you are ranking for, it looks more natural to the search engine.

– TOO MANY LINKS FROM THE SAME TYPES OF SITES

When all the backlinks come from a single type of site such as directories, search engines may view this as negative. It is much more natural to have links coming in from a variety of different types of sites such as news sites, blogs, etc.

– TOO MANY LOW-VALUE SITES

Since many companies that promise links operate hundreds of low authority sites with low trust scores, search engines look for a concentration of links from these types of sites and view them as unnatural.
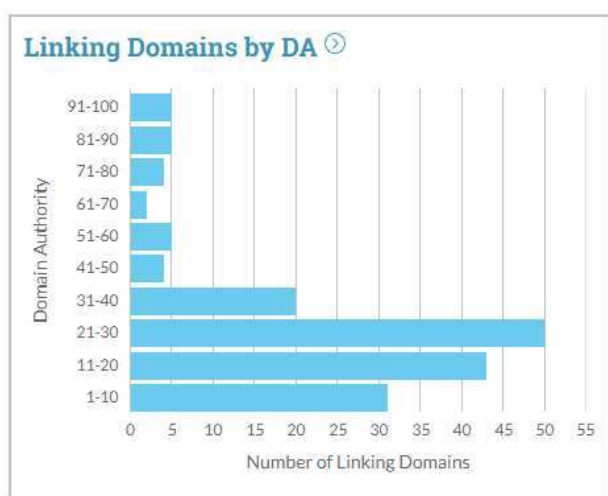
A more natural occurrence is that there is more of a distribution of links from sites with both high and low authority. Here is a graph that shows the number and Domain Authority of sites linking to SteveBizBlog.

– TOO FEW NO FOLLOW LINKS

It is far more natural to have a distribution of links that include no follow links. When a site has very few no-follow links, it appears to the search engines that you are seeking an active linking campaign.

While there are six black-hat practices that many companies engage in that will expose you as a cheater and get your site penalized by search engines, there are also two white-hat practices that will improve the search engines opinion of your site.

+ BRAND QUERY AND SEO

Search engines place additional value on upwardly trending brands and place less value on downward trending brands. This is because the search engines know that businesses work very hard to preserve the quality of their brand in the eyes of their consumers. Therefore, when a search includes a keyword that a brand is ranking for, the trajectory of the brand's interest will influence the search engine's results when they calculate where they should place the brands content on the Search Engines Results Page (SERP).

For example, If I'm looking for a running shoe and I use the keyword "running shoe" in a search query, the search engines will look to see what brands are associated with running shoes and which ones are trending up or trending down, before providing its final results to the query.

If we use Google Trends to plot the interest in the brand Nike over time, we can see that Nike as a brand is slowly increasing.
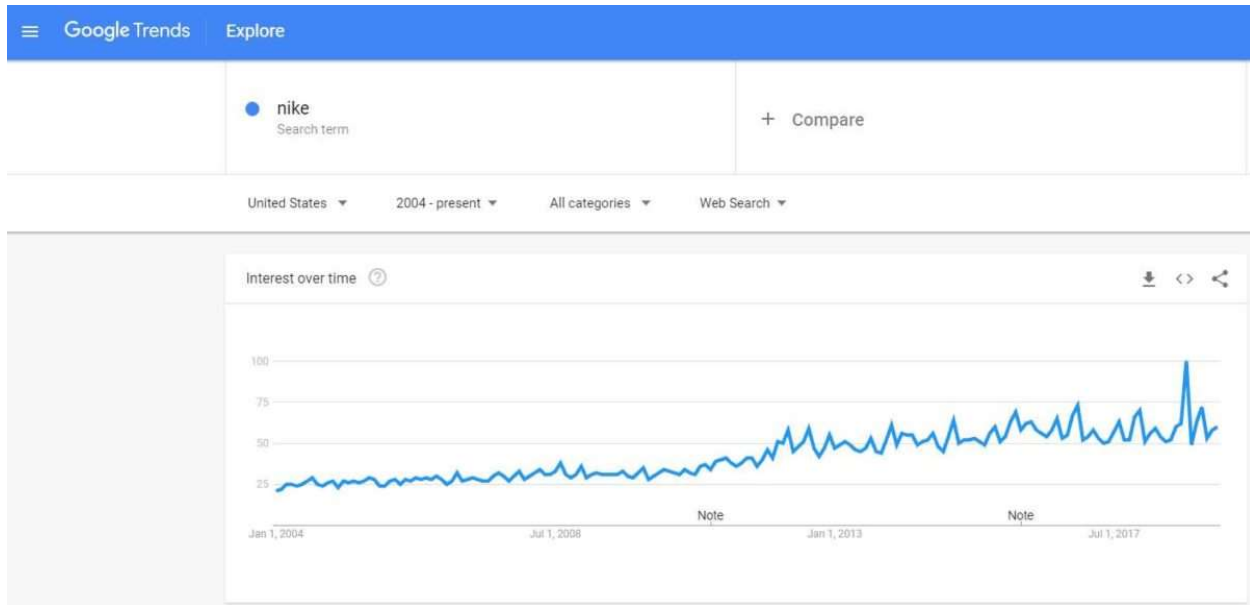
Search engines would therefore give more authority to Nike, and would list pages with Nike higher on the page for search results involving "running shoes".

Compare that to GoPro, the company that makes action cameras. If we use Google Trends to plot the interest in the brand, GoPro it is trending downward. Search engines would therefore remove some authority from GoPro as a brand and therefore list it lower on the page of search results involving "action cameras"
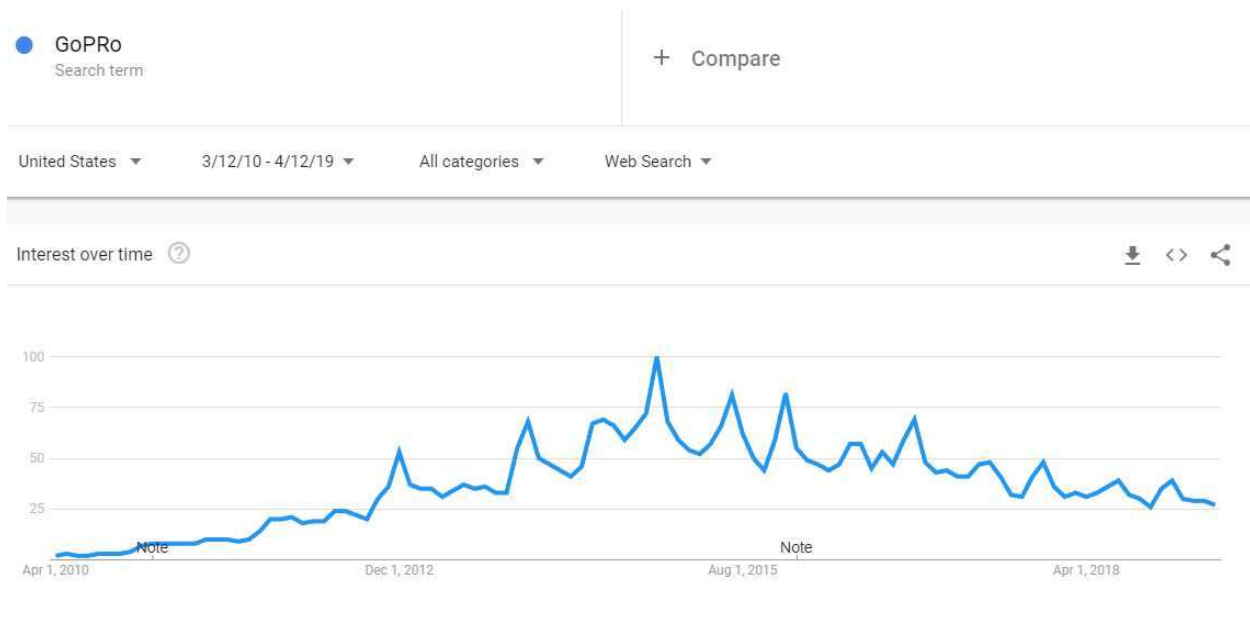
+ USER EXPERIENCE AND SEO

User metrics are often forgotten in most discussions about SEO. Search engines also look at the user's experience when ranking a website using user metrics. User metrics include things like:

- Session Duration – the amount of time a user spends on the site.
- Pages / Session – the number of pages the user viewed during a session.
- Bounce Rate – the percentage of single-page visits.

While they are no absolute numbers, the search engines will look at all the other sites that rank for the same keyword and based on your user metrics compared to others, they will adjust the Page Authority. Even if you out-optimize the other sites ranking for the same keyword. you will be rewarded if you have better user metrics.