SEVEN BOATS™ ACADEMY

Better Knowledge. Better Mileage

Seven Boats Academy presents

SEO Cookie Jar

AN E-BOOK CONTAINING SEO TIPS & TRICKS!

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Are Backlinks Dead in Modern SEO?

When I started off in the digital marketing world, acquiring backlinks was a major force. SEO experts swore by their efficacy. Companies, even startups, paid tons of money to hire and engage executives to get backlinks. This army was roughly called 'link exchange guys'! Since those early days of the internet and digital marketing, much has changed. Techniques have evolved and somehow, the traditional model of acquiring backlinks has been relegated to the backburner. So much so that **'link exchange' is nothing short of an abuse in SEO parlance!**

Yet, you would be making a huge mistake if you write off backlinks completely. Backlinks highlight your importance online. There is no better indicator of a brand's popularity than its outreach on the internet. That is probably why a *Search Quality Senior Strategist of Google, Andrey Lipattsev, holds backlinks as one of the two most importance factors considered in the search engine giant's website ranking system.*

The problem starts when brands, especially the middle or lower tier ones, try to

acquire links. The usual skyscraper approach of using email blasts directed at websites popular than yours for link exchanges do not work anymore. Despite all those resources engaged in directing emails for links, precious few come with favorable responses. Bigger brands do not want any truck with your business and you end up frustrated, heaping colorful abuses on the use of backlinks and how useless it can be as a tool!

It is time for a different approach. Here's what I think about circumnavigating your way around the question of acquiring links. Now big brands are not offering you backlinks because your content and website, or brand value, is not good enough for them. Once your content starts to get popular, these brands will notice your work and you will probably get what you are looking for. **The key is to make your content popular. Your brand name should be noticed online**. You can do them in a number of ways.

Infographics, for example, is a tool that is continuing to ride the popularity wave. Initially people though that they will die out like a yesterday fad. But it has caught on and survived. Once you create infographics, you should promote them through your online channels. Social media platforms will be excellent for this purpose. You can embed them in newsletters and send them over. Identify content creators of a similar vein. Contacting influencers in your domain of work is another option for you. Email them your work instead of just link exchange requests.

Other than infographics, **gifographics** is another technique that works. Animated gifs are extremely popular on social media, especially Facebook. You can do one step better by providing the gif code for those who like your gif and want to use it on their website or blog. The idea here is to open up your content for new audiences and content editors. Instead of simply looking for links, let them notice your work and be interested in your brand.

There are a couple of thumb-rules that you can follow to judge the value of your content. Ask yourself: would you share the content you are creating if you were an unassociated user who has nothing to do with your brand? Secondly, take the content's main keyword and do a Google search. Are the content quality of the first 3 results better than the work you have created? If the answers to both questions are in the affirmative, you are ready to publish the work and take it to the big brands.

After all, you should remember that it is doubly difficult for a largely unknown brand to get noticed than a popular brand. If you get something in your email

from a reputed brand, you are tempted to check it out. For a smaller brand, the content must really stand out to get noticed. This is the target you should have when developing content. **In the modern day SEO world, only excellent content will get you the cream of links for your website**. Almost all other efforts will draw a blank.

So, rethink your body of content and that will redefine your efforts for better backlinks.

Use GIFs for Better Site Performance

GIFs or Graphics Interchange Format are around for more than 2 decades now. GIFs are excellent to grab the attention of the visitor to your site. Its popularity in arresting attention can be judged from the extensive use of GIFs in social media posts, particularly on Facebook. While using GIFs can be excellent in getting you the precious attention from your visitor, it can affect the performance of the site adversely.

GIFs tend to make the site heavy and difficult to upload on the visitor's digital screen. This dampens the performance quotient of the visitor. It applies to how Google rates your site's performance. This makes GIFs necessary evil, so to speak! However, if you optimize GIFs for better performance of your site, you kill two birds with a single you know what.

In this post, we shall briefly discuss the many ways in which you can optimize the GIFs you have on your site. The most obvious method is to compress them. It brings down the size of the GIF images, making them easy on the bandwidth of the user.

There are essentially two methods to compress static GIF files:

- **Lossless:** In this method, the compression is done keeping the data of the

parent GIF file intact. So, when you want that parent file in its original avatar again, you can do that. In other words, lossless compression allows you to undo the compression. This does not bring down the file size too much but the quality of your image remains untouched.

- **Lossy:** The opposite of the other method, in this case, data is shed from the original GIF file. It brings down the weight of the file. The flip side is that with each lossy compression, the quality of the image disintegrates further. With too many such compressions, you will end up with a granulated image that does nothing in terms of visual appeal.

There are other ways to optimize GIF files. One of them is to convert the GIF file into a PNG format. Both formats are wise choices for the images on your site. The difference is that PNG images are lighter on the bandwidth. You have a window of about 25% of the original file that can be compressed in the PNG avatar as opposed to that of the GIF file. You can do that without affecting the quality of the image. You will find a large stash of software that can convert your GIF files into PNG, like Convertio and Pic.io.

Now, let us turn our attention to animated GIFs. Here, too, there are two popular methods of optimizing them:

- **HTML5 Video:** You need to understand that GIF files were never meant for video. As a result, creating animated GIFs were going to be an issue anyway! Still, the format became popular as a video alternative. But the files get too heavy for comfort. You can size them down by converting these animated GIFs into HTML5 videos. By this method, you can get a leverage of 95% over a GIF file! 95% smaller and holding the same positives is a great bargain.
- **Lossy:** The use of lossy optimization works in animated GIFs as well. Yes, the same cons apply here too: the quality of the images go for a toss with each compression. What makes this method tick, despite such a disadvantage, is that the human eye cannot discern such rapid changes of color and texture. Your users can barely tell the difference in the quality of the image degrading due to lossy compression.

While you cannot do away with GIFs, you can use them wisely. GIFs are unparalleled in their ability to grab attention, like I said. On second thoughts, you may feel that the trouble to compress them may not be worth the effort but trust me, it is! When there is a way to stop page bloating caused by GIFs and still retain the positives they bring to your site, why not try it out?

Optimize static GIFs and use HTML5 or MP4 videos instead of animated GIFs.

That's all!

Write in with your thoughts on this matter.

SEO Essentials for a Greenhorn

SEO Essentials - what you need to know? For some years now, I'm running the 7boats digital marketing academy. No, this post is not about plugging for my academy, but bear with me for a couple of essential lines before I jump into the topic! I started out with this academy because I had a lot of trouble finding experienced SEO professionals, among other digital marketing hands for my company. I harked back to my own days as a greenhorn where I picked up most of what I know today through self analysis and research, coupled with information and guidance of some distinguished seniors.

This state of affairs is particularly pronounced because you will scarcely find institutions teaching SEO. My academy is focussed on bridging this gap in the domain and dare I say, we have managed to do it successfully for years now. Writing from this experience, I'm compiling some SEO essentials for a greenhorn in this field. This post will not be about specifics and technical knowledge. For that kind of in-depth information, you have to check out my academy course material.

So, here goes what you need to know about the SEO essentials as a newbie SEO professional!

First things first, you need a thorough knowledge about the internet as a whole. Picking up jargon and online lingo is crucial. No matter where you learn the tricks of the trade, you will have to fall back on this knowledge of internet jargon, like HTTP, domains and roots, clients, servers, DNS, VPN, PageRank, Domain Authority and the like. This information bank will be helpful when you study for further SEO knowledge through online or offline tutorials. Even if you fly solo, you cannot always check back while reading articles on the subject. Knowing the jargons will facilitate the learning process.

Secondly, for SEO essentials, you have to understand that learning SEO is more practical than theoretical. That is how I have learned this profession. You have to make mistakes and learn from them. As a newbie, tinker with web development tools. Create a scratch website and try to optimize for that. In the process, you will learn what is there to know about domain hosting, etc. What's more, you will pick up some additional, offline tricks that are not found in any book or tutorial! It is fascinating what you will learn when you work things out all by yourself!

SEO alone is of limited value unless you combine computer skills with that of negotiation, marketing and PR. As an SEO professional, you need to hard-sell your site's requirements. For example, can you close the deal on a guest blog post at a blog which is many levels higher up the online pecking order? It takes a lot of conviction and negotiating prowess to achieve this. The same goes for link exchanges. SEO executives are often required to find out greener pastures for getting more exposure for their websites and blogs. You need a commanding idea about popular online channels and where you might find your target audience.

Finally, data crunching skills are a must for SEO professionals. In my training modules and work floor, I make special note of professionals with patient research skills. You don't need to be a geek or a nerd to do this! You just need a nose for research and number crunching. Numbers speak more than you can imagine. You can develop precise strategies and targeted marketing if you are good with your numbers. You can also open up newer avenues and previously unknown doors by following the trail of numbers.

Other than these skills that are strictly by the book, there are others that require smart thinking and a flexible outlook. Handing out a penalized website to a newbie is a good way to test how they handle an outright hostile situation! After

all, in your career in SEO, you will have clients coming to you with penalized sites. You need to know how you can work them out of a tight spot.

This business isn't always about going forward. It is also about pulling out of the muck, dusting yourself and then embarking on the journey forward.

Optimizing for Competitors' Branded Keywords

SEO was never a blinkers-on approach. You have to keep your options open and on the table at all times. Plus, you have to be ready to change tracks and try something different each time your Plan A doesn't work.

It is only natural for an SEO executive to think, at one point or another, about going after competitors' keywords! It is commonplace to think that your competitors are walking away with the business and the traffic because of their stranglehold on keywords, many of which they have branded for themselves. By branded keywords, I mean those keywords and phrases which have the name of the brand or the sub-brand attached to the keyword.

It is not wrong to think that optimizing for your competitors' keywords is unethical. You can do that by staying within the rules of the game. What you need to know is how you can optimize them properly so that you derive some benefit out of it. Otherwise, it is much ado about nothing!

Evaluate potency of the branded keywords

To start off this process, you need to evaluate the potency of these **branded keywords** that you want to target. Are they as efficient as you think? Previously you looked upon them with a tinge of envy, but not anymore! Now you need to cast a critical eye and find out their performance on search engines and their dominance of the market in your domain of business. If you find that the numbers are worth going after, move on to the next step.

The next logical step in this process is to conduct **opinion surveys** among potential buyers. The question to ask is obvious: why are they buying from the brand you are targeting as opposed to buying from a brand like yours? There are various ways of conducting these polls and we are not going into those details in this post.

Once the reasons are in and you compile them together, the flowchart moves to the next step: can you draw away some of those customers? In this step, you can ask your own brand about the same questions that you put up for customers of your competitors. That will give you an idea of where your brand stands in the perception of buyers. If the two results tally enough for you to say for sure that you can go after the branded keywords and draw away people to your side, you should start the core optimizing part of the operation.

Self Hosted Content

There are two ways in which you can strike out on the content required for optimization. One is the self-hosted kind and the other is the third-party hosted variety. Let us examine each one separately so you know what to do with each of them.

To develop content for self-hosted platforms, you need to identify the right keywords and phrases. Not all branded keywords of your competitors will qualify for your needs. Since you have the volume against keyword chart on your side, you know the keywords that are out of your reach. Don't get too ambitious!

While you write content for self-hosted web pages, you need to focus deeply on the user experience. Remember that you are targeting customers of another brand. It will take more than the customary effort to wean them away.

Third Party Hosted variety

Moving on the third-party content dissemination, you should follow the usual route of using guest blog posts, especially from influencers and opinion makers

in your line of work. You can ask them politely to give their two cents or even get an external reviewer, paid of course, to write some reviews about your products and services. Opting for sponsored content is also something that you can use.

Amplification

Finally, when the content pages of both types are filled up, it is time to amplify and promote them across the board. Here, too, influencers play a large role in getting your content the kind of exposure it sorely needs. Of course, you need to get your own group of loyal customers on your side. Their bit in plugging your content is always an added impetus. Social networks are quite valuable in this regard.

Legal Precautions

A note of caution: Before you embark on this plank, get in a word with legal experts about copyright issues on branded keywords and the like. You don't want legal hassles and I'm no legal eagle to guide you here!

Doing SEO: What does it Mean?

Doing SEO -

Consider the example of advertisement. You pay for ads in a newspaper; you find those ads published in those pages. You pay for ad slots on TV; you can watch the commercials on air. There is a simple relationship, between the effort you put in, and the result you get out of it.

Now think about the example of SEO. You are ' doing SEO ', as the commonplace parlance goes. And what happens? Do you see your brand hitting the top of the ranking heap simply because you made some changes off-page and on-page?

There is no direct effect of what you do, when you talking of doing SEO and the result that you get. At best, you can affect the factors responsible for search engine ranks. It is never something that is totally in your control. This is why no SEO team can predict search engine ranks, nor can they say for sure that they will hit the top 10 ranks at all! This is why doing SEO is one of the most challenging tasks. You are constantly wondering if you are doing SEO the right

way.

Doing SEO means the combination of various departments. These departments can be broadly classified into three teams: the leadership team, the development team and finally, the content team. Let us look at these teams closely now.

First up, let us talk about **the leadership team**. This is the decision-making wing of the SEO process. It is the management, the guys with the whip. They decide on how the whole cascade is going to come down. The vision has to come from the leadership team. They decide on the goals and the objectives.

There is a clear reason why they must spell out the route map before the other two teams get into the action. This team will decide on how the SEO initiatives will work. If the leadership does not understand the road ahead, and comes up with a workable plan, SEO efforts will not work out. For example, if the leadership keeps too stiff a target, it may lead to unscrupulous means of achieving them. Like, picking up paid links to boost ranking chances.

It is the duty of this team to align everyone on the same page and make communication easy across the board. This team is also responsible for reporting, analyzing and testing methods.

Next up is the **development team**. This is the clearly the team that builds up the website and looks after its platform, including security. This team works on the on-page and off-page functions of the website. Their job is to make the site friendly to search crawlers. They have to ensure that the web pages are easy to index and rank. They will also work towards facilitating the job of the content team, that is, to publish content.

The third wall is the **content team**. As the name suggests, this team will come up with content in all forms, like infographics, videos, blogs, web pages, etc. The content team is tasked with the job of catering to the tastes and preferences of the target consumer group. This team will also work towards making the content visible on the SERP charts. Relevancy of content is another responsibility of this team.

It is your job as a digital marketing manager to bring all these three teams under one umbrella, much like the arms of the executive, the legislative and the judiciary. It is not possible for you to micro manage every department here, so you need competent professionals to do the job.

Doing SEO, therefore, is more than just logging into Google AdWords or checking keyword ranks obsessively. You have to bring the disparate elements together. The challenge is mainly because you don't know how each of the contributing factors can influence search engine algorithms. You can work with some calculated guesses, at best!

SEO is a dynamic field. Changes happen in a rapid state, giving little time to turn tables. Doing SEO is also about keeping these three different departments stitched together. That is the success of building up a formidable SEO team.

SEO professionals alone cannot make up this department. You need content and web developers.

The Importance of Prioritizing SEO Tasks

Weighting of Thematic Clusters of Ranking Factors in Google

(based on survey responses by 128 SEO professionals)
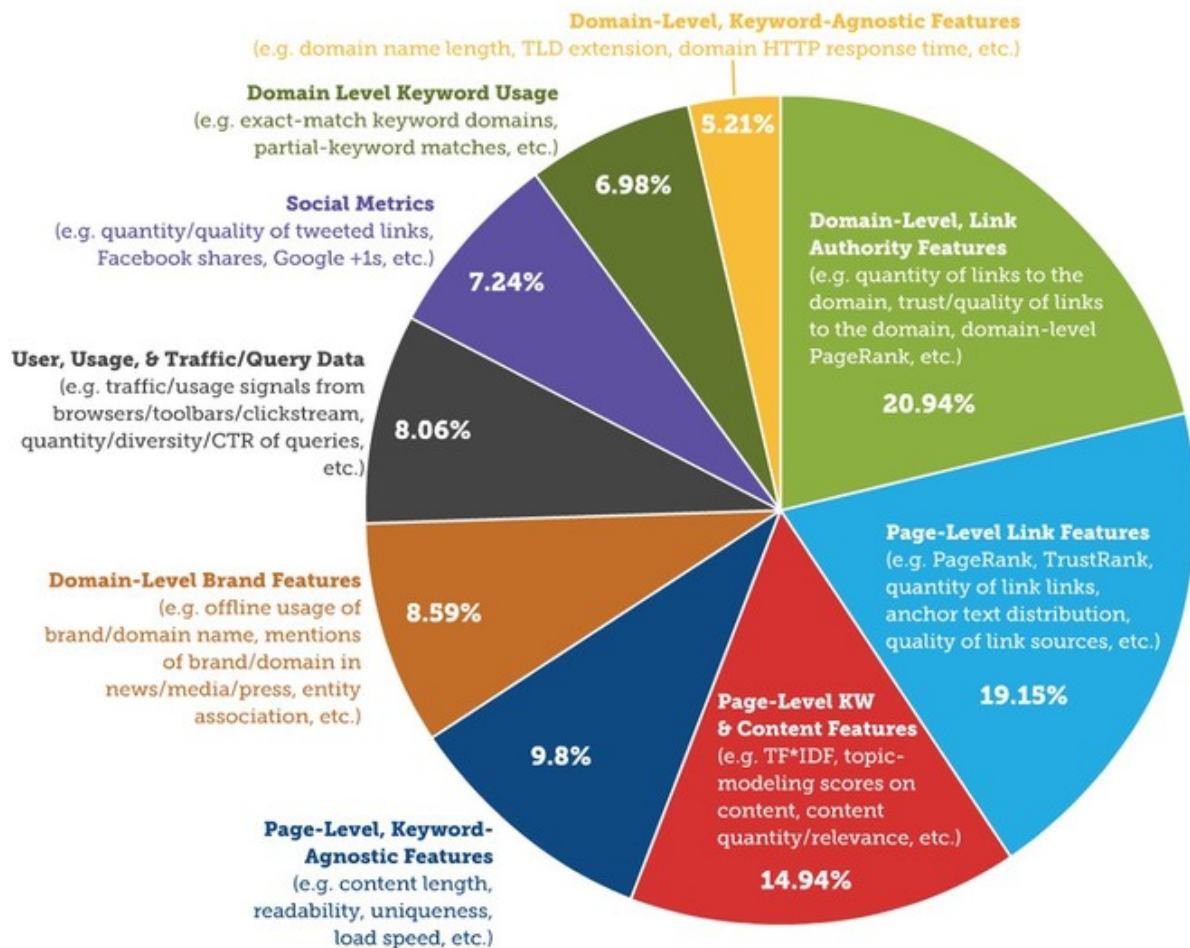
The life of an SEO professional is difficult. And busy! There are so many things to be done within the framework of a day. Leaving out any of these **SEO tasks** may have an adverse effect on the optimization potential of a website or blog. Clients will not be happy and there will be repercussions, as they say!

The question is, what should be the priority of the tasks at hand? You need to know that. Otherwise, you might be busy propping up some unimportant part of the SEO front while neglecting a rather important point of customer interaction.

Put very simply, this is like preparing for a busy day. You chalk out every single hour of the clock so that you touch upon the more important tasks ahead of the others.

In the SEO context, you have to work on tasks like rewriting the meta tags and descriptions of the website, taking care of the rich snippets and other dynamic URLS, along with other sundry jobs. External work requires you to check up the SEO presence of the website, attach integral links or talk to some influencers in order to get them to vote for your brand. All of this needs to be done!

The first tip that I will suggest, do not fly solo. Get a team of dedicated professionals and segregate duty. It is not possible for you to micro manage everything. Entrust segments to people who can do the job for you. Let them prioritize their tasks and get back to you. Ask them why they felt the need to prioritize this way. If their vision matches yours, go ahead with the list. Conversely, talk to them about what you feel and talk it through to a better list of priorities.

The big question that comes up next is, how do you know for yourself about the priorities among these SEO tasks? Here are some pointers that help me to set down my own list of to-dos.

The first question I ask myself is about the goals of the different projects at hand and decide about the most important SEO tasks. Not all of my clients have the same objective. Their time frames to achieve these goals are different as well. I map out a blueprint for myself about the goals to achieve against the time allotted for each of them. It ensures that I don't end up devoting time to something that does not need immediate attention against a project that cannot wait a day.

I also try to map out my schedule over a period of time. It can be for 30 days up to a year for a long-term project. What I achieve through this map is a clear understanding of the days to come. I can step aside off fire-fighting programs that way. There is no panic in my conference room because the days are planned ahead and I try to cover every area of the tasks that require attention.

Respective team members know what they have to do. This is the next step that helps me immensely. I designate duty with a time stamp. When every team player has their own list of priorities, they all add up to meet mine! I take into account their time frames when mapping out my own. I cannot tell the SEO guy to schedule a website launch in a week when my web developer has asked for a

fortnight to get the site ready! Sometimes, most actually, it is these little simplified tasks that make life so much easy.

Capturing the right metrics make up my fourth wall. I pencil in the metrics I need and how I'm going to get hold of that data. Individual team members are also asked to come up with their own metrics and sources of this data. We coalesce these metrics and decide on a date when we compare data with the rest of the team. When your projects meet smaller deadlines successfully, you can be assured of meeting the final big one!

Personally speaking, I think only you can decide your priorities as an SEO professional. Think of what is important to the website and the client. Your priorities will be decided by theirs.

How Necessary is Weeding Out Your Site?

Every website has a number of pages that do not add value to it. These pages are just there! They have little value additions in the form of user interaction. They are not that informative either. In fact, some of these pages can contain duplicate content, broken links or wrong navigation.

In short, these are pages that are basically scum under the glitz and glamour of the home page, the services page and the Contact Us page!

Because these pages are not used at all, or so it seems, webmasters forget about them as well. They just lie there, gathering dust. The reality is more than just what meets the eye. These web pages have the ability to bring down the ranking power of your site.

Google does not take lightly or kindly to these redundant web pages. True, it gives you value for those wonderful pages of content that you have published. At the same time, you are pulled back a little because of these weeds.

The problem is not restricted to how Google's algorithms perceive or rank your website.

The end users, for whom the websites are developed in the first place, bear the brunt as well. These pages, sometimes heavy with images or even videos, eat into the bandwidth. This kind of wastage brings disrepute to the website. What happens it that you are working round the clock to market and optimize your website, while users are being repelled by some web pages that should not be there in the first place!

Identify the Weeds

Now that you know about the existence of these weeds, you can do well to look for ways to counter them. You cannot leave them around, especially now when I have jolted you out of your comfort zone! I will go to the length of saying that almost every website on the block has these weedy web pages.

Identifying those pages can be simple. Pick up the Analytics page you have. It can be Google Analytics or any such other tool like WebTrends. Put your site through this tool. Measure for metrics like Bounce Rate and Average Time spent on each of the web pages. Now, pick up a median value or even an average figure that is acceptable to you.

For example, if you find that the Bounce Rate average figures somewhere around 60%, pick out the pages that has a higher rate. Match them against Average Time spent. You will come across web pages that fail on both counts. These are pages that users bounce away from without spending any appreciable time. Do you actually need these pages to continue?

An additional metric you can use is a tool like OnPage.org to track down the pages with duplicate content. You can use a threshold value like 80%. Anything above this figure qualifies as something that you need to edit or simply dump. What you are doing is actually letting go of an infected part of the body that needed to be severed for the overall health benefit.

The core trick is to pick out those areas of a website that make it less acceptable to both Google and the users. At the same time, there can be some misleading data coming in from tools like Omniture. These figures may lead you to believe that a web page is not performing according to your expectation.

You have to dig deeper into the data and figure it out. For example, there may be a web page in your site that did not get the benefit of optimization or marketing as much as the other web pages. For some reason or the other, you have missed out the optimizing on this page. When you look at the data and find

this page a poor performer, you are not being very fair to an otherwise good page!

The Final word

As digital marketers, our job is to ensure that we keep the best foot forward always. A wrong step can undo all the good work of months, if not years. Similarly, if you allow weeds to use up all the fertilizer and manure you have invested for the good plants, you are not being fair to your own work.

Weed them out, now!

Technical Knowledge of SEO: How Much Do You Need?

Of late, I am witnessing this raging debate on the internet over the need of technical knowledge for an SEO executive. There are some pundits out there who feel that SEO professionals do not have to be completely in the sync when it comes to technical knowhow. For example, an important part of the job of search engine optimization is the use of HTML or CSS codes. Can we say for sure that anyone with zero or little knowledge of these languages actually qualifies as a thoroughbred pro in this field? Some are of the opinion that this kind of technical knowledge is not mandatory.

Importance of Knowing Codes

Personally, I feel that the knowledge of coding is a very important add-on for SEO personnel. Knowing the codes may not lend you wings but it certainly teaches you how to fly right. At the same time, if you do not know it, it does not take away from your claim to be in this field. There are a ton of online guides to help you get the coding right. You do not have to be an expert technician. All you need to know is a working idea of what to do with the codes.

Ranking of Sites: Technical and Otherwise

The second bone of contention is the use of technical knowledge about web designing and building, especially optimization. SEO experts know that the makeup of a website has a lot to do with how it performs on the yardstick of search engines like Google. What they often gloss over is the fact that more than these technical issues, the usability of the website has a direct influence on its rank in the algorithms. Even when you get the on-page or off-page SEO correct, the website may be terrible when it comes to user experience. What hopes do you have of getting to the ranking summit with such a website? Similarly, if your website is quite awesome to users but lack in basic SEO tweaks, it can pull you down. Both need to feed off each other.

Beyond the Reams of Technicality

This may seem a little weird but if you are in this field for as long as I am, you will surely get the point. Imagine a situation. You are doing everything correct (at least, that's what you think!) and still a problem continues to bother your chances at the elusive rank. Suddenly, it is almost like a flash of lightning, realization dawns on you and you fix something that did not even look like a problem on the surface! You did not consult any guide or technical knowhow book to find out the nagging issue. You simply relied on your experience of looking at a properly optimized website. So, when you came across a site that was not so, you could quickly identify what was wrong.

The Content Question

Some aspects of SEO are there that are beyond the reams of technical knowledge. One is this and the other is content. The draft that you write for your website may have all the right keywords and maintain a proper density and all, but even then it does not click. Why? The reason is usually that you got so caught up in technical matters that you failed to put some soul into the writing. Content is not science. It is art. Keywords and their density is important to make it more viable as SEO fodder, but when real readers come along (not algorithms), you have to pass the test of readability. Technical knowledge cannot get you that pie.

The Final Word

There cannot be a final word on this primarily because this is a grey area. This is why the debate rages on! The best way out is to strike a middle path. You can make use of technical knowledge to fine-tune the SEO program, without making this knowhow the be-all of it. At the same time, if you rush in with emotion and

little knowhow, you are bound to be on the losing side.

I have thrown my hat into the ring of this debate through this post! It's your chance now. What do you think of this issue?

Some Useful Link Auditing Tips

Building up an intricate web of links is the nirvana for any digital marketer, especially an SEO professional and there comes the importance of link auditing! However, difficult as it is to procure quality links to integrate into your web, it is even more complicated to ensure that you audit them correctly. Wrong audits, or even misguided audits, will result in unwanted links cluttering your backyard. Before you know it, there will be some spam links coming in and finally flooding the show. It will invite penalties from Google and scorn from your potential customers. With the right link audit, you can bid goodbye to both of these problems.

There is a catch here. There are a number of free tools available online that will help you in auditing links. I'm not a big fan of these free tools and prefer to audit my own links with the help of Microsoft Excel and Google Spreadsheets. It ensures that I sift through the linking data myself and learn how things are working for the website. I'm basing these tips on the basis of manually auditing links and not through the use of free tools. You can use spreadsheets of both Excel and Google for this purpose.

Link Auditing Tip #1: Segregate Domains and Subdomains

To audit links, you need to accumulate all the data first. Download all the links you have spread out over innumerable sources! The tough part is to manually evaluate if you need all of these links at all. You will want to check at least one link from every domain. Even then, you find that many of these domains have uncountable number of links leading to them. To check just one link per domain, you have to extract the domain or the subdomain from every single URL. The data, when segregated, looks easier to evaluate and audit.

Link Auditing Tip #2: The Process of Review

I have found that there is little sense in checking through every link of a domain, like I mentioned above. However, this process of reviewing is not cent percent accurate. While a single link can paint a picture of what the corresponding domain holds for you in terms of link value, it can also be slightly misleading. Often, you may find that a good link and a bad one coexist in a single domain. With just a cursory glance at the link or the domain, you may not always find it out and remove it. The manual process of review has little scope to identify them individually. If you are careful about picking out those links, you need other internal checks, like using Scrapebox, to weed them out. Otherwise, this manual check of one link is enough to measure the health of a domain.

Link Auding Tip #3: Finding a Method in Madness

The time is now ripe to tell you how you can find a pattern in all the hundreds of links that you have downloaded. Usually, spammy links do have a pattern that makes them identifiable. With these URLs having a common factor, you can use that common factor in the spreadsheets to pick out every spam link bearing that pattern. For example, you may find, on a cursory glance, that more than one unnatural links have the words "example" in them. Find out all the links that have the word "example" and you have a pattern of spam links. Other examples of such patterns include: spam links may come in from a common free subdomain like blogspot or weebly; these spam links may have a common keyword functioning as an anchor text.

Link auditing Tip #4: Check and Update Disavow File

All these spam and unnatural links that you have picked up should be clubbed under a file head for disavowed links (Link Disavow). You can check these links

against new links that you download in the future. Once you have disavowed some links, do not spend time reassessing them. Instead, carry out the process of updating your link profile and adding more disavowed links to the current crop. Maintain separate sheets to keep adding to the list of spam links.

The Final Word

With more sophisticated links and upgraded algorithms of search engines making work tough for link building, you need to keep your own house in order. Other than the tips I shared, you can come up with your own list that are unique to your business or online marketing methods. Do share them here!

Does Google Favor Big Brands in SERP?

There is a common grouse among small brands online. The pet peeve is that they feel that Google and its army of algorithms favor big brands over smaller brand names. After all, is not internet supposed to be the great leveler? Should it not bring all brands, big and small, on the same pedestal and then encourage them to compete? As far as I can remember, the foundation of SEO is based on the principle that it gives low-cost online visibility to lesser-known brands.

If I find that Google is favoring big brands, who have the deep pockets to carry out not just online but offline marketing blitzkrieg as well, I will feel a little disappointed, if not cheated. Before jumping to conclusions, we have to look at the picture objectively. Does Google actually favor big brands in SERP?

What Actually Affects Google Search Ranking?

Let us look at the definitive condition for ranking on Google. Ranking positions are usually determined by the algorithms of Google and what inputs they bring in from individual websites. The parameters are never about branding in that sense. Google will not pick up a bigger brand like McDonalds over a local burger manufacturer simply because McDonalds is a reputed name. the question now is, should we reject the SERP claim of a bigger brand simply because it is a big brand? Think of the other side of the coin. Is the bigger brand doing something that Google is appreciating through a better rank? Why can it not be that the bigger brand is doing a better job of SEO and grabbing the SERP spots on merit?

Google Ranking Factors and Correlation with Branding

To take our discussion forward, look at the link building scene. As a website who is approaching another site for links, will you want to link with McDonalds or with a local burger site? That is how a big brand wins over Google with a more organic link network. A lesser brand will have to approach for links or get into tie-ups to build up a network of links. Established brands do not need to do that. They are approached by others and they can develop their link chain easily. They can even spread it out wider online. Surely, Google has to reward this link network. It is not the brand name that Google is rewarding with SERP status. It is the SEO work.

Social Media Factor

Social media networks may not directly influence Google algorithms but they surely have a strong say. A brand which is known and established will have its content shared and viewed by more social media users. Share a post by a celebrity blogger and another by an upcoming, amateur blogger. See for yourself which one is read and even appreciated! Even when the amateur has written better points and arguments, the perception always tilts towards the known name. It is the perception which tells you that the more famous blogger is probably right. It is common human psychology. Google will see how many people have tuned in to read the post. The blogger with the higher number, by default the more famous name, wins the SERP battle.

Other Factors

Other factors that influence SERP status, like number of visitors, PageViews, even Click-through Rates (CTR) work in the same fashion. A bigger brand has more people visiting the website, checking through more web pages and clicking on links, including PPC ads. Even when the content is better for the anonymous entity, people think that because they have never heard of that brand, it is better to go for the safe bet: the established brand.

The Final Word

What does this teach us all in SEO and digital marketing? We have to do our part in a better way to grab Google's attention. It cannot hide behind the excuse that Google will always favor the market leader and rank me down the ladder. Pick up

lessons on why the industry leader is grabbing that top slot. Look at your own game and you will find Google giving you the boost you need.

The World of SEO

In this digital world, the concept of Search Engine Optimization is one of the most sought after aspect to optimize the brand value of your business. In fact, SEO is an immensely viral buzzword that's all around the web these days. So what is this mysterious SEO?

It refers to how well your site ranks on search engines like Google, Yahoo, Bing etc. When you search for a certain term or phrase, search engines use complex processes to list all the pages that might be of interest to the user; of course, the higher the site ranks in the search, the better would be your chance to get noticed on search results.

So what does SEO actually do? SEO experts make sure that your sites use words and phrases in correct order in order to maximize the probability of how well the site ranks in searches. Here is a good example. Let us assume that you have a site on landscape photography. You can simply have 'Welcome to our landscape photography site!' and hope to get some visits from such wording.

However, it all goes downhill from there. People generally don't search for grammatically correct phrases. They won't search for 'What are the benefits of green tea' – they will search for 'green tea benefits,' 'benefits green tea,' 'green tea pros.' That is where SEO kicks in.

People who are SEO experts at bluehatmarketing in Toronto ensure that your site is optimized with appropriate keywords, meta title tags, meta description tags, image alt tags, variation in anchor texts and header H1-H6 tags which ensure that your site will get visited as much as possible via web search engines. Search Engine optimization helps you to get most relevant search results according to your requirement. Your green tea site won't be filled with word salads or other illegible mumbo jumbo in order to get the visits. SEO isn't only about getting the visits; it is also about getting the people to stay on the site in question. That is why it is so important to include important search words in the most relevant way.

Why all this matters, you might ask. Well, to put it plainly, if you own a site, for the most part, you will want people to visit it. Of course, you might have other ways of generating visits (paid advertizing etc.), but organic (or natural) visits you get from being visited via search engines is like passive income in finances – it constantly generates new visits after initial effort placed into doing SEO. Basically, it is a win win situation.

Do all sites need SEO? To keep it straight and simple, SEO is a must for every kind of online content as it increases the scope of being viewed and spreading awareness.

Need New SEO Model to Keep Pace with Online Consumers

What was the need for SEO in the first place? Make the products and services, including information, easily accessible and available to online consumers. That was the start of the game. Over time, the game has branched out many verticals and factors, making the traditional rules of the game obsolete in the process. SEO can no longer be limited to search engine ranks and keywords. For example, even when your product is listed at the very top of the SERP heap, the consumer does not hit 'Buy'.

The consumer looks at options. If the product or service is a high-end or luxury purchase, the desire to look at other options become more intense. The same goes for B2B purchases. According to a statistic revealed by Google, an average B2B purchaser will conduct 12 searches before they buy anything! The

considerations include peer reviews, online reputation of the brand, comparisons, customer service and a whole range of other factors. It is never about keywords or SEO only! In fact, any brand that shuts out these factors to focus only on keyword-oriented SEO will find the going quite tough.

To understand the new SEO model and how you can implement it in your own business, let us break down the purchaser's journey into a few critical stages.

Stage #1: Lack of Brand Awareness

This is the first stage when the consumer does not know about your brand. On your part, you have no idea that such a consumer exists. The SEO at this stage will comprise of an inclusive approach where you try to get people interested in your brand under one online umbrella. Audience development is the focus of this stage. The keywords for this stage can be high or medium competition because you are trying to reach as many people as you possibly can.

Stage #2: Brand Awareness

This is the stage when the consumers know about your brand but does not know the next stage of the process. At your end, this is the first step towards convincing the consumer to buy. The SEO at this stage should focus on developing quality landing pages for the consumers to troop in and develop content pieces that address their queries and possible doubts. You can brainstorm and pick keywords that users may search for at this stage of the buying cycle. Incorporate them into optimizing the landing pages.

Stage #3: Brand Comparison

Till the 2nd stage, we were in conventional territory, so to speak! Now this stage is very online-oriented. People tend to compare more when buying online because they can quickly check websites and options without stirring from their couches. What it means is that the SEO at this stage cannot work in isolation. You have to look at the competitive arena around you. Now that people are comparing your products or services with others, you need to measure up and look good in a group as well, not just individually. Consumers must find you are on every platform. Tap into competitive keyword research and spread out your presence on the Google radar.

The Final Word

The final word on this post will be a tad large!

Now, when you have conquered the buyer at the 3rd stage, you have won yourself a victory! The point is, there is another departure from the traditional SEO model here. Through these 3 stages, you have included many, but some have dropped out of the funnel as well. Is there something you can do about consumers who have not entered the funnel at all or dropped by the side? In modern SEO, you can influence these consumers through a number of ways:

Guest Posts: Writing guest posts for other blogs or websites will bring you into contact with people who are outside your marketing funnel but very much interested in the kind of products or services you deal in. The bylined pieces give you that option to tap them. Syndicated posts are handy too.

Affiliate Partnerships: You can tie up with related websites that sell the same kind of products that you do. You can work out a deal or simply stick to the pay per lead model. I realize that this is not an ideal scenario from any stretch of the imagination but it is nevertheless better in influencing 'outsiders'.

Online PR: This is another way of getting noticed through a different kind of SEO. Paid and free online press release websites will get you into contact with consumers outside your regular circle. If you are a new player, online PR gets you into the SERP elite slots without having to spend too much time in the trenches.

Do you have other ideas to rein in new-age customers through new-age SEO methods? Write in!

Some Irritating SEO Problems and their Solutions

SEO is a demanding field of work. It taxes professionals because there are no immediate tangible results. The core SEO job is very organic and time-oriented. What you do today may bring you results sometime next week. This lack of instant gratification makes professionals edgy because most times they do not know if they did the right thing. Waiting for the results of their task can be quite daunting. These challenges apart, there are many grouses that SEO professionals have to contend with. In this post, I will outline some of the most irritating problems that I have faced in my career as a digital marketing professional who specializes in SEO.

SEO Problems - #1: What Affects Rankings? Seriously?

Whenever you check out SEO guidelines, tips, tricks, whatever, you come across all these best practices. Many do not even know what it means, but they keep using it in their conversations! Anyway, best practices are ideal methods that you should follow. These include avoiding manipulative web links, spam links, building light websites, proper keyword usage and strategies, etc. There is a long

list. The problem is that despite following each of these practices to the T, websites fail to make a mark on the SERP scene. Result: SEO professionals get frustrated and angry! To add to their anger, they find many websites not being diligent to the best practices and yet getting away with higher SERP clout. The question, therefore, is, what actually affects SERP rankings? I mean, seriously!

SEO Problems - #2: Why SERPs Fluctuate Unreasonably?

This is the second most irritating grouse for me. I follow every rule in the book, improvise judiciously, exercise caution and grab some favorable SERP slots. What do I find in a couple of days? I have lost them to a competitor, someone who's website analysis revealed a much weaker SEO mechanism in my research. It took me some time to accept the fact that Google has its own way of working. I make some changes in the website, Google does the same in their algorithms. Not every update is splashed all over the online media channels. My competitor is also doing tweaks internally. Taking all these variables into consideration, they have edged me out and nosed ahead. Instead of seeing red, you have to keep up your analysis and testing.

SEO Problems - #3: My Competitors are Spamming and Still Ranking!

When I do my research and find that my competitors are using spam and manipulative links and still hitting high SERPs, I flip my top! Is Google on a nap? Why can't they spot what I can? Undoubtedly, these thoughts are bound to cross your mind as a SEO professional, no matter at what stage of your career you are, experienced or otherwise! There is a bit of understanding required here. Spam links and their ilk can come from any quarter. It may not always be plugged by the competitors themselves. A quick look at your own backyard and front-yard may reveal some spam links from your website as well! The point is that Google knows it too. It is not holding the competitor's website responsible for these links that have cropped in from somewhere. And that is why there is no penalty in their SERP ranks.

SEO Problems - #4: Google is Partial towards Big Brands

This is one grouse that I felt is true very strongly, much like other SEO professionals that I know. It seems that no matter what you do, big brands will

always go ahead of the competition curve. If you are competing against a giant in your domain, you are unlikely to win on an open battle, not if Google is the referee! With experience, I have learned two things: one, big brands have a strong offline presence and that rubs off a lot online. People click on their links because they recognize the brand name. Google is bound to offer what users want to click on! You cannot hold them at fault there. Two, to beat big brands in the SEO arena, you have to do things differently. For example, big brands are bound to have a vice-like grip on the generic keywords in your domain. You may find it tough to grab SERP spots there. What you can do is look at the long-tailed keywords. These are not targeted by big brands because they deem it beneath their interest! Pick those up and spread out your influence. Also, find out topics in your domain that big brands never talk about, for whatever reasons. Highlight them and write about them. That will get you attention from a different group of consumers.

The Final Word

Google is the bedrock of SEO, as far as practicable. You have to work in it, not without. SEO professionals will do better to understand, accept and accommodate its whimsicalities, if it can be called so! The job is to always look to find a way around it, not abandon it out of irritation.

Answer Boxes and Knowledge Graphs: Are they Sipping Away your SEO Juice?
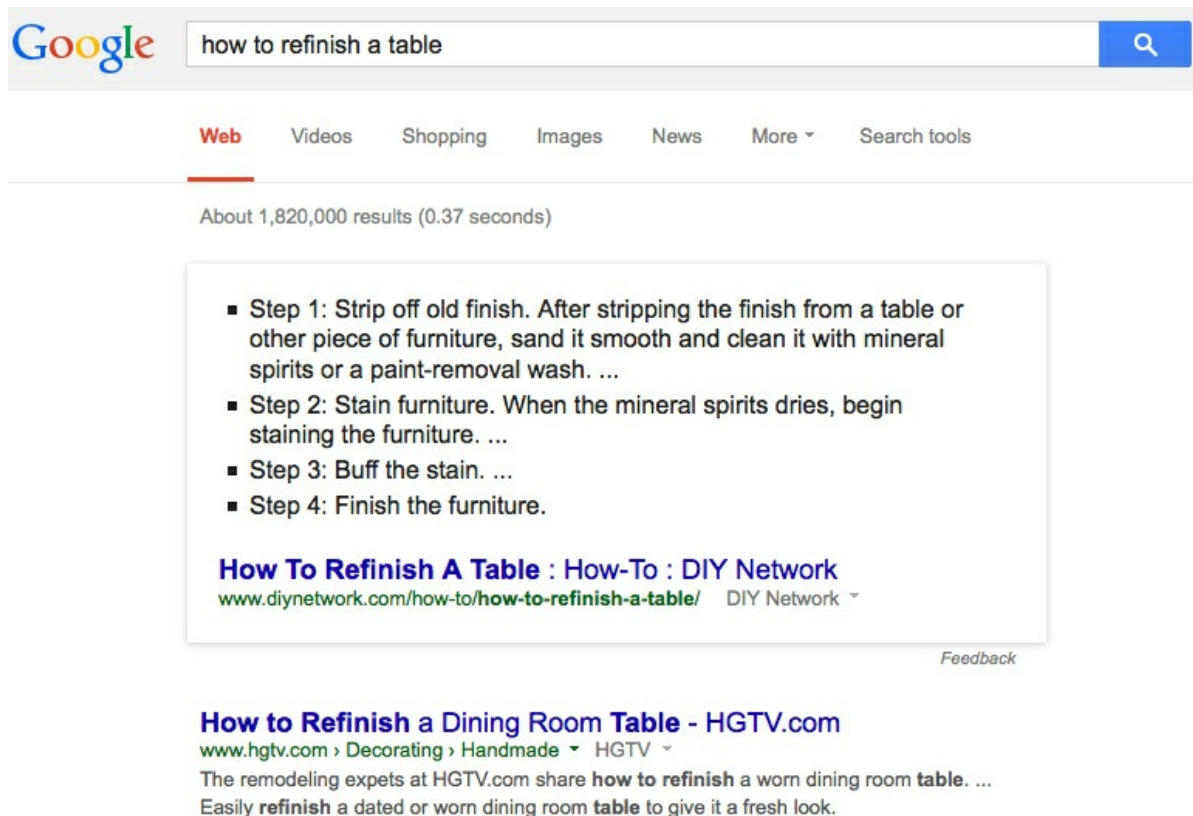
SEO professionals the world over are a concerned lot! They are worried about the latest add-ons that search engines like Google and Bing are attaching with search results. Popularly known as Answer Box and Knowledge Graph, these are instant answers provided by the search engines to a particular query of the user. When that happens, no matter what your search result ranking (SERP) is, you do not derive any benefit from it. The user does not bother clicking on any of the links because they have already got the answer to their question!

For example, you search with 'Weather New York now'. The search engine gives

you a boxed answer. As a result, you do not click on any other web link that you see underneath that box. In other words, the SEO effort put in by the websites ranked even at the very top of the heap amounts to nothing. The same goes for a Knowledge Graph that appears on the right side of a search result. There is another variant that does the same kind of work: Extracted Instant Answers. This is probably the most irritating of the lot, according to SEO experts! In this case, the search engine extracts the answer to a search query, gives the answer to the user and may or may not provide a link to the source of the answer! It may also be that the answer was pulled out from your own website and you do not get any credit out of it!

With these challenges in mind, I looked around for some solutions. My purpose was to find a way in which SEO professionals like me can tide over these telling blows to the work that we put in to capture SERPs. We also end up spending money for certain keywords in PPC models, etc. On my mission, here is what I found out.

Tip 1: Keyword Opportunity Matters Most

The next time you want to buy keywords or put up ads against some keywords, do not simply look at the volume or the competition. Spare a look for the keyword opportunity. How much opportunity has that keyword got to get you the eyeballs that can justify your money or effort? Do you find Google or Bing providing Instant Answers or Knowledge Graphs for that particular keyword? If yes, how much space it is occupying above-the-fold? These answers can get you keywords that have the potential to be seen and clicked more than others. As obvious, Click-through Rate or CTR goes up significantly high when there are no Instant Answers or Knowledge Graphs in the search results.

Tip 2: Get Answers that They Cannot

The answers and knowledge banks provided by the search engines do not always satisfy the searcher. In fact, there are instances of Google deleting them for certain search queries because the searchers do not accept the answer that they provide and search again. You have to look for those chances to get your content be seen or read. If you can provide the right answer against a bunch of such queries, over time you will find that Google has abandoned the answer box and you can declare your presence with greater dominance.

Tip 3: Structuring Date Debate

This is a judgment call that you need to make. Should you structure your web data for Google to glean it from your website and use it in the Extracted Instant Answers? If you do not structure it for the use of search engines, will that hurt your cause? You have to take a call here depending on what you want. In this context, you have to keep an eye on what your competitors are doing. If they are not doing it, you have more room to decide for yourself. Otherwise, you may lose out on SEO juice anyway if you do not structure your web data.

Tip 4: Question about Specifics

This is a SEO professional's perennial query: should we focus on generic keywords and take a shot at the jackpot or play small with long-tailed keywords and build things up from scratch? If you want to avoid answer boxes and knowledge graphs, you can do well to target specific keywords with long tails. The chances of hitting answered blocks are lesser here. Of course, you have to customize your meta and title tags, etc for those specific keywords. I have noticed that in the long run, it can prove quite beneficial for SEO.

The Final Word

The SEO field throws up new hurdles every other day. As a professional, it is our job to navigate around them! The tools of Google and Bing mentioned above can be quite frustrating for the profession, especially when you are investing so much in getting to the SERP top. I hope these tips will work out for you. It did for me!

Do you have other suggestions to work around Answer Boxes and Knowledge Graphs?

The Daily SEO Checklist for your Website

Readers of this blog would know that SEO is not something that follows the popular ad catch-line, fit it and forget it! You have to work daily with a SEO checklist in hand. There are no quick fixes to optimizing your website, true. But it is equally true that there is no auto-run mode for SEO. It cannot work in the model that you achieve some lofty goals in terms of keywords or market dominance and then rest on your laurels forever! SEO, like the topsoil, will erode away with time unless you work daily to retain it. That is something that I have found that many brands or companies fail to comprehend. They want to get the SEO job done and dusted. They do not realize that it is only the start of the process.

SEO Checklist - Project-based Tasks

In this post, we are looking at some tasks that SEO teams have to do daily in order to keep their stranglehold on the search engine ranks. For example, if you are working on a project that is off the ground and giving you satisfactory results, what do you do next? You conduct audits on a daily basis. Check for broken links, missed opportunities, untapped potential and other details that slipped under the radar when you launched the project. Daily audits will bring these to

light. Fix them up and continue to do that regularly. Once you fix one loose end, check for results. Is it working according to plan? Test and change things around if needed.

SEO Checklist -Goal-based Tasks

I have noticed that defining goals for a SEO team is very important for its success. Otherwise, the team gets caught in the maze with too many options. For a SEO team that works daily, goal-based tasks become important. Here are some steps that comprise the goal-based tasks of a SEO unit:

- Draw up the broader digital marketing goals of the brand or the company. Next, pencil out the role that you expect the SEO unit to play. Clearly demarcated roles often become the key to success.
- Identify areas and concerns that the SEO team is best suited to address or resolve. For example, in the department of capturing search results through keywords, SEO is the best choice. However, for branding across consumer groups, social media marketing may be more up your alley than SEO. Figure it out with your SEO team.
- Evaluate and test the results again. Just as in project-based tasks, evaluating and then testing again is useful in goal-based work as well. You have to prioritize your tasks and then implement them accordingly.

SEO Checklist - Do the New

You need some additions to the already running SEO machinery. That will definitely come into the picture when you are conducting daily SEO. You might feel that you need a new blog section or a YouTube channel to suit your user engagement. What happens if you do not think about these aspects on a daily basis? You miss out on opportunities even if you have a strong brand presence. You never know when that will start to slip away. Keep adding to your repertoire. Build up community discussions, provide Yahoo! Answers or even do some social media profiling of your consumer base. That will help you develop a better reach with the options available at your disposal. You have to give yourself the best chance in order to improve your SEO status.

There is the other option of doing something different to grab new and fresh eyeballs. With the same keywords and marketing, you tend to go around in circles with a glass ceiling to rein you in. How about changing track to get new people on board? You can try out some new keywords pulled up from a different perspective. You can do some brainstorming sessions with your team to find out

which other consumer group will find your product or service attractive. It pays to think laterally. Without a daily stab at SEO, you cannot touch these areas of improvement.

The Final Word

Anyone who has worked in the SEO field for some time knows that SEO is not a one-day job. You need to keep working at it continuously to achieve results. I take that discussion a step further: to continue to achieve results or even maintain status quo, you need a daily SEO plan. You need more than just checking Google Analytics or putting up a blog post. You need a plan.

What do you do for your SEO on a daily basis? Pool in your thoughts here!

SEO Audit: The Five Questions to Ask

We have written about SEO audit extensively on this blog. We have covered topics that will tell you what the ideal metrics of SEO should be and how to measure value through them. During the course of writing these blog posts and through my work in SEO, I noted that despite knowing the SEO audit tools, most teams fail to make the dividends that they signed up for. Exploring this anomaly, I found out that the reason is very simple indeed. SEO audit will give you the right value of your brand only when you ask the right questions. It is like asking a fish the depth of a river instead of the height of a tree.

In my meetings with clients and financiers as a digital marketer, I have jotted down some common questions. Like, when do we start making money out this

process? A very practical and justified question it is! Because irrespective of the lack of tangible metrics in many aspects, anyone who puts in money would like to know how it is being spent. Other than this fundamental question, there are others which do the rounds. Like, which are the keywords that you want our brand to rank? This is a question that is best answered by the brand owners themselves because they know better what works for their brand and what doesn't. It is more so because they hold the vision where they want the brand to go in the coming days.

Keeping these questions, along with several others, I have developed the top five questions that SEO professionals should ask during their audit. Answering these questions will hold the key to an audit that will address all the concerns of the brand owners or clients.

Question 1: What is the USP of our brand?

I have dealt with this topic in many earlier posts here. It is very important that SEO professionals know and understand the USP of a brand before trying to promote or sell it online. No one likes a copy of another. There must be some difference. Even if you are selling a product imitation, there is something that distinguishes it from the parent source. Like price or even better customer service! Blow up this USP in the SEO initiative. And how well you do to promote or sell the USP of your brand should be there in the audit report.

Question 2: Do you address customers' questions?

Brands, especially those functioning online, are so busy shouting what they want to say that they forget what the customers want to hear. No one wants to know how much effort you take to dish out a particular product or service. Customers want to know what they will benefit from the effort that you put it. Getting the drift? Tune your SEO messages accordingly. The audit report of your SEO team must contain answers to find out how well you have addressed the queries and questions of your customers.

Question 3: What do we show off to the search crawlers?

Your ticket to the SEO world is the search engine and its crawlers. And they are always looking for something different from the websites that they track. Do you

have a state-of-the-art mobile friendly version of your website? Or, an app that makes like easier for customers? Show them off to the search crawlers and earn some brownie points. If you are able to do that or do not have any such show-off-worthy material, it should feature in your audit report. You should get on board asap!

Question 4: Who are your brand ambassadors?

We are not talking about celebrities here! We are talking about that faceless, nameless group of people who speak well of your brand and share your content online. Identify and empower them. In this social media age, they can do for your brand what your hired employees cannot. They can take your brand's message to their own personal circles and make it big. Once you identify them, you have to find out why they like and prefer your brand. Give them more of it and you will ensure that you are never short of positive publicity. Of course, pin them up in your audit report!

Question 5: What is the conversion process?

This part is pure business. With SEO, you bring online visitors to your website. How many of these visitors convert into customers? That is a number that was always there in digital marketing audit reports. I propose you include the conversion process as well! I have noted that the cumbersome and even complicated structure of signing up for a brand often repels customers away. Smooth out these worries in your audit report.

Do you have any more questions that you want to ask? Shout it out here!

Google's Disavow Tool: What You Need to Know

Any website that is actively optimizing itself on search engines is most likely to pick up a few web links here and there that have dubious sources. When you hit the highway of SEO and with Google's Penguin updates breathing down your neck, as a SEO professional or webmaster, these links can cause much embarrassment. They can bring down the sword of penalty on your website, not to mention the bad reputation that it picks up in the process. Now, Google offers everyone the disavow tool.

What is the Disavow Tool?

The answer is simple when you consider an analogy from the various spy films that you must have watched over the years! Field agents are renounced or cut loose when they are caught in enemy territory. The parent body announces that it has no link with the spies nabbed during field duty. That is called disavowing the agents. It is very similar to Google's disavow tool. With the help of this tool, you can declare web links that you are not comfortable with as not belonging to your network anymore. These unnatural links may have appeared for whatever reason but you can cut loose from their presence with the help of the disavow tool.

Google's View of the Disavow Tool

> ⚠️ This is an advanced feature and should only be used with caution. If used incorrectly, this feature can potentially harm your site's performance in Google's search results. We recommend that you disavow backlinks only if you believe you have a considerable number of spammy, artificial, or low-quality links pointing to your site, and if you are confident that the links are causing issues for you. In most cases, Google can assess which links to trust without additional guidance, so most normal or typical sites will not need to use this tool.

Here is a very interesting snippet of information about Google's own perception of the disavow tool. We have picked this up from the official web page of Google:

It makes it sufficiently clear that you need to learn the tricks of the trade first before you hit the Google disavow tool. Otherwise, as evident, you might end up snapping web links that actually provided you SEO juice or simply destroy the network structure online.

What You Need: Audit

Now that you have decided to use Google's disavow tool, the first step in the right direction is conducting an audit for your entire web link network. There are a ton of tools available online that can do the job for you. According to me, the best way out is doing it manually as far as practicable. Check each link and flag the dubious ones. Map these links out on a spreadsheet before you proceed to the next step.

You can conduct the auditing process in three easy steps:

1. Download all the web links that you have from all sources available to you. You can take the help of tools like opensiteexplorer.org and majestic.com
2. Use Google Docs or MS Excel to bring all of these links on to a single page
3. Break them down into subdomains
4. Use the dedupe function on spreadsheets to ensure that only one link from each domain is present on the page
5. Check each of the web links now, armed with three important questions:

- Is this link important at all in bringing online visitors?
- Is this link present solely for the benefit of SEO?
- Is this link good enough to stand up to Google's scrutiny?

The answers to these questions will determine if you need the links.

Tips on Google's Disavow Tool

Let us take a quick look at how Google looks at the disavow tool so that you get a grip on what to do with the dubious links that you have unearthed in the auditing process.

- Do not panic when you see web links that have surfaced out of nowhere! Google is not paranoid about such links, nor is Penguin. The idea of the disavow tool is to do a cleaning up job of your web links. It does not mean that you take down every single web link that seems suspicious on first glance.
- Make sure that you disavow links not on the URL stage, but on the domain stage. If you don't do that, you might miss out on some rotten URL links in the process as they might be embedded deeply into the domain.
- If possible, remove the links that you have disavowed with Google's tool. However, if you find the process cumbersome and time consuming, you can leave it at that.
- You can bring back a disavow link if you think that you have jumped the gun. You need to modify the disavow file. But don't expect the 'reavowed' link to kick into action straightaway! It takes considerable time for it to get back into the groove. As Matt Cutts says, it is easier to disavow than 'reavow'.

Did I miss some points or do you have any queries? You can leave them in the comments section and I will try to answer them!

What Clients of SEO Expect and What You Can Give Them

SEO, even after all these years, is largely misunderstood by the very clients who hire professionals to do the job for them. There is a stark mismatch between how the SEO team looks at deliverables and how clients perceive them. Look at this example to understand the point better. Suppose you, as a SEO professional, tell the client that when a primary keyword of the business ranks among the top 3 on Google's SERP, there will be a 50% jump in the number of unique visitors coming to the client's website. After a couple of weeks, the client comes back and asks you why the number of unique visitors has not jumped 50%, completely forgetful of the first condition, that is to rank a primary keyword among the top 3!

The Time Factor

This is usually the case in the SEO domain. Every SEO professional has to deal with client's expectations, especially when it comes to time frames. SEO is not done in a matter of days, or weeks, even months. To hit the top ranks in a cluttered business domain, it takes years of hard work and then continued work over the years to occupy that rank, to ward off competitions. In this post on tips

to deal with client's expectations in the field of SEO, the first one is to pencil the time it will take for each single step of the process. Use the metrics like Audit, Fixing Bugs, Content Management, Social Media Engagement and map them out against time. When you achieve each micro goal, the client feels vindicated that you are moving in the right direction.

The Changing Times

The next bone of contention is how SEO is conducted and done in the modern times. Clients often pick up bits of information about the SEO process from sundry sources and when they meet SEO professionals to hire them, they bring those bits to the table. Some of them feel outdated and many may be downright illegal today! Here are some SEO processes that are *not* done anymore:

- **Content Farming:** Writing and publishing one article after another and innumerable blogs is passé. No SEO team does that anymore, at least not the ones that are serious about ranking on Google! Content farming has been replaced by writing quality content and then promoting and sharing them on online platforms.
- **Link Buying:** Buying or selling web links through dubious means is also a thing of the past. Modern SEO has no room for paid link building methods and your website can be heavily penalized if you are caught doing so.
- **Get Ranks:** Pushing for SEO ranks is another trick that is missing from the online marketer's notebook. Today, it is about doing the right things in the SEO perspective and waiting for the sophisticated Google crawlers to come and get you.
- **Dormant Websites:** Websites are not about creating, publishing and forgetting. You have to be dynamic and not dormant about websites. Update and modify content as per requirement to keep the web pages fresh for the crawlers.

What We Do Today

Now that we have outlined for SEO clients what SEO professionals don't do, let us look at what they do in a nutshell:

- We audit the website that clients bring in. That includes looking the user experience on the website, the content on the web pages, the branding, the keyword strategy, the PR value of the website and finally, the competition analysis
- We outline a blueprint to jot down the possible avenues that the client's SEO

requires and what kind of return on investment each of them will bring

- We bring all the different teams like web designing, web development, content writing and SEO together to build up a consensus on our plan of action and the way forward
- We wait for months on end and track the progress of each keyword, across all the platforms. We prepare and pore over reports culled from Google Analytics and Webmaster Tools.
- We test new possibilities and how they will fare for the client's websites and requirements

Read more about the brief steps to do digital marketing the right way

The Final Word

Now that the expectations are set up for the clients, you will ask yourself: which are the clients SEO professionals are looking for? These are people who understand that SEO is not an exact, precise science or that SEO is not hard-selling. They will realize the power of SEO and understand that it comes with some patience and conditions.

Clients and SEO professionals, pour in your comments, experiences and anecdotes here!

Google Leaked Panda 4.1: Some Lessons Learnt

The Panda updates of Google are always looming around the corner, checking up websites that are flouting the rules. Webmasters and internet marketers are perennially wondering about how their websites fare on Panda's score sheets. The sheer range of aspects that Panda takes into account makes it practically impossible to duck under its radar. The other weapon of Google, Penguin, shows up now and then, penalizing websites, setting the scores straight and leaving some websites in tatters. Panda updates, on the other hand, are there for keeps. It makes is doubly important for websites and SEO professionals to understand Panda and incorporate the lessons and guidelines in their work.

In this post, we are looking at some of the lessons that Panda 4.1 update has to impart for us, the SEO professionals, and digital marketers. These lessons are necessary to ensure that you are always on the good books of Panda. Check them out:

- There is no chronological order as such but the lesson at the top of my list is the need for every single web page to serve its purpose. For example, a services page must give out information about products and services in a way that users benefit from the content of the page. There are too enemies of this line of web page construction: trying to pack in too much material in one web page and being confused about the objective of the page. Talk it out within your team as to what you want the page to accomplish. In another example, if you have a signup page, put the signup box and important instructions above the fold. This gives clear indications to Google that you are giving value content and pulls down the bounce rate of a web page.

- Offsite references carry a lot of weight in the context of Panda yardsticks. Google identifies and knows the experts in every single domain of business. The movers and the shakers of your business field are right there in Google's books. The question is: are these people talking about you or your brand? If the answer is yes, you are so on the right track! If no, you need to make that happen. You need that buzz where industry experts use your web content in their articles and blogs, social media mention, the works. When that happens, you get quality traffic to your website and deflect the attention of Google towards your website. If you continue with the good work, you will be designated as a industry expert yourself, a status that will do wonders for your brand. Getting inbound links to your website and positive reviews are par for the course.

- A quick look through the Quality Raters Guidelines is all you need to understand this line of thinking from the Panda. You cannot allow the user experience of your website to be interrupted by the ads that you put up. There is little more frustrating that popup ads showing up every now and then, breaking through the smooth user experience. There is no denying the fact that ads bring revenue but to you and to Google, websites are for users, not ads! Ads are there because users are there. You cannot afford to drive away users because of your interfering ad scheduling. Quality Raters Guidelines tag this ad interference as a gross violation that goes completely against the fabric of the internet experience.

- Imagine a situation where you write an exam for 180 minutes and submit the paper only to realize that you have forgotten to write your name on the top! That is what happens when after all the pains you take to prop up your website, there is a naked Apache link somewhere, a broken navigation there, spelling mistakes littered around, etc. These are counter-productive and contrary to belief, NOT minor glitches! On the computer screen and in this phase of the information age, these are amplified multiple times. Proof-read your website and tie up the loose ends. When Panda comes visiting, you don't

want to be caught napping

There are some don'ts as well that can take a look at:

- A much known but much abused tip: don't repeat keywords. Not in a single web page, yes, and not sprinkled over the entire website either! Keep it very natural (where have you heard that before!)
- Don't publish content because you are 'doing SEO'. There cannot be a worse reason for writing blogs or articles. Focus on the purpose of developing user experience through your content. The SEO part will follow suit
- Don't miss out on providing validated business information on every web page of your website. You never know when the user decides to contact us. Don't allow the user to hunt around for contact coordinates
- Don't forget to quote references. Attribute your post to the parent material so that Google knows that you are playing by the book and want to give credit where it is due.

Have some questions about Panda 4.1? Ask me here!

Some Useless SEO Metrics

Metrics are awesome in the sense that they help you measure the performance as well as provide the clue to weak links in the chain. SEO metrics have evolved over time, the old giving way to the new. Some metrics of SEO that looked like invincible are now gathering dust in the office attic. In this blog, we have often suggested SEO metrics that you need to look at in order to remain in the game. Today we are throwing up some SEO metrics that are completely useless! The reason is that we don't want you to fuss over them and move on!

Keyword Density: Who cares about keyword density these days? Keyword density is roughly the amount of keywords you inject into a content piece measured against the total number of words in it. In the good old days, keyword density was a prime cause of concern for writers in the internet marketing division. I can vouch from personal experience how they were badgered to get the keyword count right! Today it is the quality that Google looks at, more than keyword density. Smart internet marketers do the same.

Number of Backlinks: Another throwback to the dinosaur era of SEO! The number of backlinks in an SEO effort was looked upon as medals on the uniform of soldiers. That respect and prestige for the number of backlinks in the kitty is now replaced by the quality of backlinks that you have under your belt. Search engine algorithms are more concerned about what the quality of the backlinks is,

rather than how many you have of them. Dump the number metric from the backlink scheme. Get rid of spam means to acquire more links. Rather, go high on the quality quotient.

Few Keywords: The outdated practice is to place all your SEO bets on a few keywords. That is not the correct approach anymore. If you find that you competitor is holding sway over a couple of keywords, look at avenues to rule on other keywords instead of putting your blinkers on and taking your competitors by the scruff of the neck! It makes more sense to create your own kingdom and rule it and expand it, rather than try to usurp someone else's. There is ample room for more keywords. Your jostling for those few keywords will put your SEO effort to insurmountable limitations.

The New SEO for the New Google

Google has changed its ways in the last couple of years, especially with their updates like Penguin and Panda. SEO companies know every inch of review written about the new face of Google. However, despite their knowledge updates, there are many SEO teams which continue dish out the old SEO formats for brands and businesses! There is little change in how they conduct their SEO or how they bring in online visitors to their websites, or those of their clients. As a result, they are facing a threat of severe penalty, if not online oblivion.

Make no mistake! This is no rant against SEO companies or teams! I just want to highlight an important fact that has scratched itself to the surface of the internet: the emerging and evolving face of SEO. Google, the primary search engine on the internet, and the deciding authority on almost everything related to SEO, has changed its plan. **It is no longer about content farming, link buying or similar other evils that SEO companies could indulge in and get away with!** The modus operandi has changed for the better and every self-respecting SEO team has fixed their old ways.

During the time of these updates rolling out from the stable of Google, SEO professionals, including myself, felt a little baffled and hassled as to why Google was making these changes when we had already perfected the art of knowing what SEO is all about. Months down the line, I share the optimism of SEO experts across the globe that no matter how many hate mails you direct at Matt Cutts, Google has turned a page in the right direction. It is true that along with

the negatives, some positives were also pushed out of the frame. But that is myopic thinking on our part!

For every epoch making event, there will be detractors and small prices that we all have to pay. With Google's new face, the crusade against spam has made work tougher for SEO teams. Generally speaking, it is only the lazy SEO units that don't want to raise their game to the next level that are still complaining about Google's updates. This is the new Google and you better get that new SEO plan ready!

Let me know what you think of this new face, and functioning, of Google.

Avoid Numbers in URLs

Traditionally speaking, there is a lot of advantage in using phrases like 'Top 5' or 'Top 3' in headlines to blog posts and articles. No brownies for digging out that several of our posts on this blog are titled with these phrases! SEO experts tell us that with these phrases you can build up more attractive and user-friendly keywords in the title. Searches with these phrases are more popular as keywords than those without them. We definitely advise you to continue using numbers in the titles to your posts.

What we are arguing against here is that do not allow these numbers to make their way into your URLs and permalinks. Blogs often have settings that pull out your title to form the permalink automatically. For example, if you title the post as 'Top 5 SEO Tips', the permalink or URL to this post will surely contain the words 'top 5'. Take the hypothetical situation that later on, after a couple of years, you want to update the information on this post. You want to include a 6th tip on this post. What do you do then?

When you add that 6th tip, your post now has Top 6 SEO Tips, you can change the title easily. What to do with the URL that still says 'Top 5'? You are stuck here! Changing the URL or permalink will upset its standing in the parameters of Google. You might say here that you can approach it with a 301 tool. That will change the URL, yes, but what about the ripple effect it will have on various other SEO factors? You will be needlessly changing around things that are already in place and definitely working in your favor.

Think of the other alternative. You write a post with a 'Top 5' or a 'Top 10' in the title. You remove that from the URL link. To borrow the example mentioned above, use 'Top SEO Tips' in the URL. That way, your post will stand the test of cruel time! You can make additions or remove tips at will, without tinkering with the URL in any way. You will successfully insulate your URL against all changes that might crop up in subsequent post updates.

Prepare the Right Report for your SEO

SEO teams thrive and run on reports. Reports are shown to clients, team members and others associated with the project. The purpose of these reports is simple: track the progress or the lack of it! This automatically means that your SEO reports must tell you the right story, or your team will be misled. If you don't have the right reports to guide your SEO team, you will pay a rather heavy price. Here are some pointers that you need to keep in mind when you glean reports for your SEO team.

Firstly, begin with having a clear idea of what you want to be reported through the data and stats that you collect. Reports take quite some time to be prepared and maintained on a daily basis. If you run all over the place with your data collection, you will end up reporting stats that don't really matter to your online business. **Talk with your client and define objectives**. Once that is done, you will have a clear picture of what columns you need in your report sheet. You must also draw up a hypothesis of where you want to end up at the end of the report-collecting phase. That way you will know how far you have attained your objective.

Secondly, **reports have to be confined within a time frame**. For a report to be effective and worth analyzing, it must be bound in a time schedule so that you know how much time it took to achieve those results. You can never have a one-dimensional report where you have just the figures, say the number of unique

visitors to your website in a month. The SEO team also needs to know how much time you are considering to arrive at that figure. It is monthly, weekly or daily. Without this time dimension, your report is incomplete.

Finally, the purpose of a report in the SEO domain is to arrive at definite conclusions accurately. There is no room for speculation as such. **The analytics that you develop have to done accurately** so that you are always using empirically correct reports. Inaccurate SEO reports are not just misleading for both the client and the SEO team, but also ethically wrong.

Protect your New Website against Negative SEO

Negative reviews are not for the famous anymore! Any brand can be trolled or lampooned on the internet, and the worst part of the process is that online users do not take such negative content with a pinch of salt. The lack of credibility among many brands results in a complete disregard for the truth, whatever that may be. Online users quickly assume that the negative reviews speak the truth. This hurts not just the web traffic to a new website, but also the brand value that is in its nascent stages.

That is what makes combating against negative SEO such a prerequisite for every website. If you have a new website ready to launch or its out in the air for some time now, you need a plan to fight back negative SEO. The first part of this plan is to boost up security on your website. Hacking is a more sophisticated art nowadays as compared to even a couple of years back. Hackers can smoothly enter your website and make damaging changes. You need a strong defense mechanism against these hackers. They will play havoc with your entire SEO strategy.

You need to make your brand name more visible than it already is. Negative views and reviews about brands crop up when online users are not getting enough information and updates from the horse's mouth, that is the brand spokespersons. You need to get these updates and views out there on social media platforms. Let the consumers interested in your brand name find you on

Twitter, Facebook, Google + and the likes. Let them know that your brand is accessible and so, believable. That is very important to wall out negative SEO.

Use the Disavow Links tool of Google with more regularity. Believe in the adage: You are known by the company you keep! When you have incoming links from dubious sources, your brand name gets affected and online users have an adverse view about your business. Use this tool to disavow entire domains that bring in spam traffic to the website. Remember that such artificial influx of visitors do no good to your website. On the other hand, they undermine your brand's presence with their negative shadow. Get rid of such company to fight negative SEO effects.

Building a New Site? Fix your SEO

Once the die is cast, is there any point in going for sweeping changes? You may force your way to make those changes happen, but a die that is wrongly cast will make its presence felt in more ways than one! You will keep making changes but will never be able to achieve complete satisfaction. That is your predicament if you build up a website without caring a hoot about SEO. The best way for entrepreneurs and business startups looking to develop a website is to get a SEO onboard before you finalize the website designing and development.

In this post, we will discuss some SEO facts that you have to keep in mind when you are building up your website. To begin with, disallow robots from crawling or indexing your website, especially when you launch it as a test, in the beta version. When you fail to do that, Google will send its crawlers to index your website. In other words, your work-in-progress website, with its dummy content and other errors, will be indexed and listed by Google! When your finished website hits the surface, there will be serious issues to undo the damage done.

For online business looking to go international, ensure that your website is showing its different versions in appropriate languages for their respective countries. Use webmaster tools provided by Google or Bing to fix your geo-

location coordinates. You have to take care of these loose ends before your start inviting online users to your website. Remember that if they find your website not finished or displaying the right language option for their country, they may be scarred never to return again! There is little scope for mercy in the domain of SEO.

The content of your website will have a pronounced effect on its future. You need sound keyword research and pick the ones that fit your business the best. Do not go for a wannabe approach by trying to replicate the keyword table of your competitors or industry leaders. Every business has its own set of keywords, depending on what you want to sell and whom you want to sell. Create your own keyword research story and stick to it. Develop your content by keeping these keywords in the hunt.

Title Tags: The Salient Points of Writing Title Tags

We all know and wax eloquent about the importance of writing title tags. These title tags are the bedrock of SEO efforts to grab the top slots in SERPs. Despite knowing their importance, many SEO teams continue to flounder when up against the task of writing title tags. Here are some pointers of writing title tags that will work for your SEO team and spell well for your online branding. Take a read:

- **Lengthy Matters:** The length of a title tag can be a vital component. Title tags usually last about 65 to 70 characters. In the background of latest developments in Google, it is expected from you to write tags that explain a page, even if they are somewhat lengthy in terms of SERP parameters. The latest page design of Google also makes it imperative for title tags to look 10 to 15% shorter. In other words, you have to think not just in terms of the number of characters but also about the space taken up by these characters.

- **Small is Sin:** Why will you not make use of an opportunity that is there whether you take it up or not? There is a minimum length of characters while writing title tags that you must be concerned about. But it is usually something that should not be in your mind space. When you can write more

characters, why settle for less? If the title tag is short, Google might add a few words to fill up the gap! Instead of allowing automated software to do that, use the specified title tag space to the fullest.

- **Well Begun is Half Done:** Title tags must begin on a very powerful note. You cannot squander away an opportunity to make an impression on the reader or online user. It is not necessary that you use your primary keyword to start a title tag. What is important, however, that you use the title tag as a punch-line to knock out online readers! The first 25 characters in the title tag can make all the difference. If you can deliver something different, you have won the game in this chapter.

Fast-Changing SEO Metrics You Must Consider

As a rapidly changing scenario, the SEO domain throws up new challenges every single day. There are so many aspects of the search engine game that keeps evolving and morphing into something very different from what they were originally. This is enough to keep SEO professionals on their toes. Without being overtly alert and sensitive to all kinds of changes in technology and its use, as an SEO player you have no other choice but to keep updating your bag of tricks for these fast changing seo metrics. Here are some points that you must consider to stay ahead of the fast changing SEO metrics:

- **Local SEO:** This is a beehive of activity that every SEO team should keep close tabs on. More people are now making use of mobile devices like cell phones and tablets to conduct local searches. Desktops and laptops are taking a backseat, especially when it comes to local searches which are usually done on the go. This kind of search pattern (Local SEO) requires a ball-game different from the usual SEO strategy.

- **Search Patterns:** This is probably the single most instrumental change in the

SEO world in the recent past. People are not content with search results that cater to the keywords that they use. Intention of the searches matter as well. The certificate to this kind of search pattern is provided by Google itself. There is no doubt that SEO teams have to be mindful about this search pattern. They have to be awake to the strategy of using intentional keyword searches.

- **Linking:** The practice of link building, long considered the mainstay of the SEO process has lost much of its sheen in the last couple of years. That does not mean that link building is wholly and truly out of the picture. Link building needs to be continued by SEO teams. The only difference is that the usual way of doing business in links is not valid anymore. No more paid links or hankering after links to boost SERP. The process has to be organic and more mutual to get the approval of Google. Otherwise you are in for a steep penalty!

Keeping track of these factors will ensure that you are ready for any surprises that are thrown your way by Google!

Top 3 SEO Myths You Need to Bust

SEO professionals often get mired up in myths that are born of hear-say information. This is even more so because SEO is one field that does not really have a formal training. Most SEO professionals have become pro by picking up the tricks of the trade from seniors or from books and the internet. As a result, when one wrong idea gets mileage, it automatically becomes prevalent in the minds of many SEO professionals. Here are the top 3 SEO myths that you need to bust right now:

- **Content Marketing is Everything:** Content is king. True. But content is not everything in SEO. In the last couple of years, with Google coughing up updates to cover content marketing areas, most SEO professionals feel that quality content is all that they need. That is wrong. Does Google or Twitter have content on their home pages? No. Instead, they give something to the user to do. ***Some form of engagement***. You need to do the same on your websites as an alternative to content.

- **Links are Everything:** Another false assumption borne out of age old SEO practices! Links can be vital to the foundation of SEO but if you focus all your attention on building up links, you are missing the point. You need a robust online network to validate your online presence to the algorithms of Google. Buying links or spamming links will not help your case. Rather, it will be a

damp squib on your SEO efforts. Don't make links the be-all and end-all of your SEO effort.

- **Social Media is Everything:** Facebook and Twitter are important add-ons to your SEO drive. They cannot be your SEO drive in themselves. Remember, your Facebook updates and tweets cannot be indexed or crawled on Google. Similarly, online users are now very wary of social media spammers and link pushers. You cannot buy Facebook 'like's or have SEO executives creating random profiles to add friends and followers on Twitter. That is the part of social media marketing that we have left far, far behind. Look ahead and pick up social media as tools of engaging people rather than pushing yourself down unwilling throats.

Link Building Tactics to Avoid after Being Penalized by Google

Link Building Tactics to Avoid after Being Penalized by Google: Why would Google penalize people for link building when they know people do it and even go as far as to give tentative advice on doing it too (Google rarely explicitly tell you to backlink to yourself)? The reason is because Google knows that link building tactics may be used to manipulate the search engine and so have to take steps to stop that. Also, for the record, Google know that you can set up as many social media profiles as you like and then create your own buzz on social media networks, they are not stupid!

Here are some link building tactics you should avoid anyway (not just after being penalized), though let's face it that it is time to go whiter-than-white after being penalized because you are likely to be under the microscope (roughly translated means behave or you will be penalized again).

Backlinks from low quality press releases (Link building tactics to avoid)

There was a common occurrence of people hearing that press releases were great for SEO (Search Engine Optimization) so people started issuing them on

the stupidest subjects just so they could get a backlink from it. These days are over and people who run press release disseminators are very picky about what they release. If a company is releasing any old crap then you do not want to link a press release from their platform.

Backlinks from link pyramids or wheels (Link building tactics to avoid)

People know that too many reciprocal links are going to get them in trouble, so what companies organize are link pyramids or link wheels. A link wheel works a little like this:

A links to B

B links to C

C links to D

D links to A

In that way Google cannot tell that people are secretly reciprocally linking, but the trouble is that the companies that arrange them do it too much to the point where Google realize and end up penalizing every website that has ever been involved with the company, so it is best to just avoid them

Backlinks from poor quality guest posts (Link building tactics to avoid)

Guest posting is a big deal these days and people have started to take advantage of it. Blogs are popping up everywhere and a big part of them are low quality and only exist in order to let people guest post and have a backlink. Linking from these blogs is going to do you no favors so it is best to avoid them.

Backlinks from article marketing spam (Link building tactics to avoid)

There are companies that are spamming article content across the net in order to enjoy a slight search engine boost. Doing this is not such a terrible thing if your record is whiter than white, but yours is not so it is best to give it a miss.

Backlinks from comment spam (Link building tactics to avoid)

Comment spam is pretty pointless these days when most comment sections are set with a no-follow directive. If you are getting offers from SEO companies to add in comment backlinks then give them a miss to be on the safe side. Just leave links from comment sections to other websites.

Backlinks from forum spam (Link building tactics to avoid)

Getting backlinks from forums is not the best idea anyway because forum masters are aggressively territorial. What tends to happen is that you enter forums every week to post your link and within a week the backlinks have been deleted by the forum master. This is not a problem until Google start to notice that you are losing as many backlinks as you are gaining, at which point they will assume you a backlink spamming and will penalize your website to be on the safe side.

Backlinks from followed links from adverts (Link building tactics to avoid)

Despite what you may have read--a backlink from adverts are not search engine friendly in any way shape or form. If you have any sort of advert on another website that leads to your own then it must either be on a no-index page or it must have the no-follow tag next to it. A backlink that is followed from an advert

on another domain is bad news.

Backlinks from a blog post with very few posts (Link building tactics to avoid)

If a blog has very few posts then you can assume it has been set up by a spammer. There are even people who ask for guest bloggers to fill up their blogs. Give these people a miss and instead wait a few weeks or months and watch the blog grow before becoming a guest poster on it. You do not want to associate your website with a blog that may soon be under suspicion of being a spam website.

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Golden Rules of Writing SEO Title Tags

The title tag, often written by content writers in a rush and with spite, is a key factor in SEO. It is like the catch-line of an ad copy or the hook of a musical tune. It is what defines a web page to the search engine algorithm. A lot of care must be invested in writing the title tags for web pages. In the traditional sense, a title tag used to be somewhere between 65 and 70 characters. *Google's experimentations with the search engine layout have pulled it down to a range between 48 and 62.*

The title tag of a web page must summarize the content of that page. This is the first golden rule of writing SEO title tags. Each web page is written with a particular theme or topic in mind. The information on that page pertains to a certain domain. The title tag must reflect that. It makes it easier for Google's crawlers to index such web pages because they can quickly find out what the web page is all about and relate it to a user's search. Title tags must contain the keywords that are used in the web content of that page in order to validate relevancy.

The second golden rule of writing SEO title tags is that there must be a different page for information desired by the user. In other words, every user

comes to the website with particular needs and requirements in mind. Some come to check the products and services, some for general information while others for offers and discounts. Each of these sections must have their own separate web page. That will make writing title tags a much easier job. There will be no conflict of interest in projecting ideas through a web page.

The third golden rule of writing title tags is that you must not use one title tag for two web pages. Just like you would never think of duplicating the content of one web page on another, the same goes for title tags. Google's crawlers must not find the same title tag on more than one page. It makes if difficult to index such pages and your website may be heavily penalized for putting up duplicate content.

Top 5 SEO Tricks for B2B Companies

Are you among those that think that SEO is primarily, and only, for B2C companies? You need to rethink your strategy and incorporate SEO methods into your B2B sphere as well. After all, SEO is all about engaging online users to your brand and helping them find your website and content. B2B marketing is also based on relationship between a buyer and a seller. However, the tricks of the trade for B2B SEO marketing are a tad different from that of B2C, though the underlying basics are the same. Here are the top 5 SEO tricks for B2B companies:

- **Better Content:** If content marketing is the cornerstone of SEO, for B2B marketing you need better content, instead of more content. Quality is more important than quantity. Business heads and decision makers are your target readers. You cannot expect to be frivolous or sketchy in your writing. You need not crank out too much of volume in terms of content.

- **Social Media:** Use social media pages judiciously. Don't go around town adding random people or pushing your web links and pages demanding that people 'like' or 'retweet'. Instead of push marketing, update your brand and company info on social media pages and highlight your strong areas so that business heads take an interest in your published content.

- **Fresh Content:** In B2B marketing, you need to constantly update your website with fresh content. By adding new content to your pages, you are

giving your readers something new each time they visit your web pages. That interests business figures into thinking that yours is an active and dynamic brand.

- **Maintain Relationships:** In B2B marketing, your focus is to create and establish healthy business relations with your target audience. Promotional offers and discounts don't really matter for your target audience in the B2B framework. What works in engaging, value-added content: news and updates about your domain of work are a good idea to work on.

- **Budget Matters:** Before splurging on your SEO B2B marketing budget, prioritize according to necessity. Don't overspend on SEO items that will not add value to your campaign. The requirements of your SEO campaign depend on your objectives and target audience. Proper budgeting is essential for effective and goal-oriented B2B SEO marketing.

The Big 5 Factors of Google Rank

In the last couple of years, especially with the launch of the Hummingbird, Google has shown growing intent to provide nuanced search results. In this blog, we have spoken about how the intent of the search queries matter more to Google now than the actual keywords keyed in by the user. For example, if you search with "Name the highest mountain peak" it throws up an answer, say Mt. Everest. If you search next with "What is the height?" Google gets you the height of Mt. Everest even though you don't mention it in the search.

This intent based search is very much in vogue now. Here are the big 5 factors that Google makes use of in providing ranks to websites. These factors are *not* in order of importance.

- **Links:** The website with better linking network remains a favorite of Google. The linking factor comes from the very definition of the internet: a broad linking chain. Though the unethical ways of getting links is now a thing of the distant past, quality links matter.

- **Domain Authority:** There are many factors that go into building up domain authority and is beyond the scope of this blog post. Google spots the dominant player in a domain of interest and that powerful player is usually accorded favorable Google rank.

- **Keyword Match:** Keywords rule the roost in a big way though the use of

keywords has morphed considerably. Keyword matches help in Google to rank websites according to the queries generated by a user. Intent-based searches are a part of this chapter.

- **Relevance:** This factor is the one taking center-stage now with Google's algorithms getting more sophisticated and refined. The relevance of a search, and not the keywords typed in, has made Google searches more effective. Websites with relevant material will get the thumbs up from the house of Google.

- **Freshness:** A strong reason why websites should be updated regularly and blogs posted at regular intervals: the importance of freshness. Google likes fresh web content as opposed to web pages that are sitting on the same material for months, if not years. Get something new for users every time and Google will be your best buddy!

Top 3 Old School SEO Tricks that Still Work

Do you think that many of the SEO tricks that worked for you back in 2010 are not valid in the present day context? You need to rethink your strategy! There some SEO old school tricks that fit it snugly into the scenario of today. Of course, there are some strategy tweaks that you have to make here and there! With those changes in place, you can incorporate these old tricks into a new scheme of things. Here are the top 3 old school SEO tricks that still work and pay rich dividends *(But be very careful about doing it blindly, always your link profile must look natural)*:

- **Backlinks from Forums:** In the good old days of automated link building and link planting in important forums and discussion boards, you could get away with anything! Anchor texts on rich keywords were the crux of SEO marketing back then. Try that now and you will have a severe penalty slapped on you rightaway by Big Brother Google. *Do it differently this time around. Get the forum to offer you an endorsement in the form of backlinks. That will bring you positive SEO traffic to the website.*

- **Article Directories:** Content farming is passé. You cannot do with bulk submissions at the article directories anymore without causing a frown on

Google's face. It does not help anyway. With so many articles on the menu, readers get swamped and you get little payoffs from such submissions. Instead, figure out article directories that have provided you positive traffic. Write quality articles for these directories only. *Do not go for mass production. Aim for quality and readability.*

- **Guest Blogs:** Many SEO firms are now awake to the advantages of guest blogging. As a result, they do it in the way that seems most convenient: get a ghost writer to generate a blog post somehow and then plant it on every blog that allows guest post submissions. Most of these firms end up submitting the same blog post across several blogs in the hope that one of these posts will see the light of day: A gross misuse of a very potent SEO tool! Why not write a blog post that is informative and ticks all the boxes of what a reader looks for in a blog post? Such posts will get you better SEO traffic than 10 sub-standard ones. Google has recently penalized MyBlogGuest.com. so be very careful about Guest Blogging. *Guest Blogging must not be done for the sake of dofollow links with exact anchor text, rather you must focus on your branding and building your own author reputation.*

3 Basic Tips For A Well-Trained Link Building Team

Link Builder

If you are determined about starting your own organization of link builders, there is nothing much, apart from the fear of making a few tiny mistakes that can hold you back. No matter how big the team is, it should contain all the hardworking and diligent people ready to handle big projects and campaigns with the required efficiency.

Make your goal and required job profile very clear to the employees at the very beginning, i.e. at the time of hiring them. That makes the expectations very clear to your employees and set their own goal to achieve it. Hiring link builders with effective SEO skills reduce the trouble on your part for training them with basic optimizing skills that can always be an added advantage for you to exploit. They also should update themselves with the advanced link building methods and trends for better results from your organization.

I would like to hint at a few methods for training them for making efficient link building in your company look effortless. They should have a few things like,

Information on Why Link Building is Important? SEO or earning high rank is not the only reason behind link building anymore. Social media marketing, CRO are other reasons for which link building is important. Knowing the proper goal of the task helps the staff work in a target-oriented manner.

Feedback for Improvement: Without proper feedback about their quality of

work, your link building team can never make their work add proper value to your client's site. Ask them to maintain a spreadsheet of their work for better understanding of their own work. Moreover, you will also get a chance to have a look at the amount of progress they are making.

Learning Basics of Link Building Business: Collate some sources of materials informing about the basic "How to's" of link-building. This can become the perfect link-building handbook for the team members. In order to get best results you can sponsor an effective link-building course for them. Organize some in-house meetings for sharing your knowledge on the topic earned over the time and informing the team about the progress the organization has made over the time. Attending seminars on the topic can also enrich them with a good deal of knowledge about link building.

There are several things that you have learnt about link building and can teach your team of novices. However, the biggest strength that will require to be a good boss is ability to see it fail. Link building cannot assure you of ready success. Still, patience with the processes and the efficiency of the staff helps you beat all odds.

Ranking Will Now Depend on Page Loading Speed Too

It is back in 2009 when Matt Cutts, in his blog wrote about Google incorporating the consideration of site speed while awarding good ranks to websites. However, Matt Cutts assured that this system did not have deep impact in large set of rankings. It does not even cause big nerve wrecking troubles to the site owners. Still, there is every reason to take the site speed seriously, as it improves user experience apart from passively controlling the site's rank.

At that time, Google did not divulge clearly, how and through what metrics it was going to use for making page-loading speed a deciding factor for its rank. The patent on that matter released by Google on 4 February explains it with details. It explains that between two resources with information about the same query, the fastest loading site will be preferable to the visitors.

The 'PageSpeed Insight' tool by Google helps sites to understand how well they score on the basis of certain rules that are involved in the process. The patent has clear indication about the rules that are followed in this process. However, a little technical help from developers or people experienced in site-speed optimizing might be required for implementing them.

The patent focuses on certain points like, the number of images used in the site, the size of its resource, the web server, the network connection's involvement in the loading of its resource, etc. While, comparing the loading speed between two resources Google usually confine itself to the devices being used in the same

nation and that using the same browser.

The patent also contains details about how the tool can predict the probable loading time of certain pages and sites. Till now, it is not going to show the details about resource's loading time on mobile devices. The factor is hardly going to make a huge impact on the page rank until and unless comparison is being made between two sites with very similar amount and type of information. Higher loading time can get a site demoted to a lower page rank, based purely on user experience quality.

Avoid Penalization by Shunning Black Hat Practices

There are numerous not so advisable ways to optimize your website on the search engines. Some of such ways are quite infamous too and often very susceptible to the algorithmic updates of Google. On one point probably all the webmasters will agree that Black hat SEO should be avoided for the benefit of the site in the long run.

Anchor Text for Link Building: Having the exact keyword as your anchor text cannot earn you a good position in the search engine anymore. In fact, the Penguin update has landed many sites with anchor texts matching completely with their keywords. This kind of disrepute has made it very difficult for them to recover in the near future.

Low Quality Content Affects Link Building: Mindless link building can harm your website in more possible ways than doing anything beneficial for it. Inbound links from sites with poor contents, unnecessary ads and often-low traffic influx despite having good quality content and ads can avert links from sites with high PR. Moreover, this link building procedure has its own limitations and it cannot work for long. In the long run, it is only going to hurt the search

rankings of the site.

Overused Articles: Article syndication is a very old and poor system of optimizing a website. This practice still works for short-term benefit of a website. However, it is never advisable for the long term stability of search rankings of a site. Article syndication allows one particular article to be submitted to multiple article submission sites, which in turn can only lower down credibility of its owner. Sometimes, site owners prefer spinning multitude of different articles out of one piece of content. This procedure often ends up yielding write-ups with grammatical errors and poor quality of sentences. It is needless to say that any habit of this format has never done any good to any website.

All the above mentioned black hat SEO practices and several other like these cannot ensure sustained SERPs or higher search engine rank for a long term to websites. There is no point risking the position of your website's rank for short-term benefit. Avoiding black hat practices also help you avoiding being penalized by Google.

Tips to Optimize Multi-language Websites

A multi-language website is often very helpful when your business targets a larger demographic with people speaking and of course understanding different languages. If you are writing about soccer in Brazil, there is no harm in writing it in Portuguese. But, if you want to pen something related to soccer in Latin America, Argentines can also like to relate to your story. In that case, it will be stupidity to select your language not keeping the wide demographic of the football fans of South America in mind. Multilingual websites often fulfill the requirement in addressing a larger group scattered in different parts of the world. Optimizing multilingual website is no rocket science to bother the webmasters. Some careful and smart moves can keep your site on the top of the search engine.

Optimize URL Structure: If you want to make Google understand how important your website is to a particular nation, it is always advisable to take the pain of having independent sites dedicated completely to that particular nation. Google prefers dedicated domains for the sites for different nations and people speaking different languages. Amazon is among the ecommerce sites who understood this smart way of doing business and that certainly went in favor of the profit they reap out of it. In Germany, they are known as amazon.de while, people in the United Kingdom know them as amazon.co.uk.

Rely on an International SEO Tool: It is difficult to optimizing your Multi-language website without having a SEOprofiler account. As an owner of a multi-language site it is your responsibility to create your own SEOprofiler account.

Character Encoding: Google extracts encodings from content and the HTTP header. Google usually recognize all sorts of character encodings. Still, all multi-language site owners are recommended to use UTF-8 if and when possible.

Language Recognition by Google: Google often detects the major language of a particular webpage. So, it is never a good idea to test its efficiency by publishing texts for different parts of the page in different language. Header, sidebars, menu and other sections of a particular page should be in the same language.

Top Ranking Sites Cannot Retain Positions without Occasional Brushing

Does your old and quite established site fails to beat the new ones in regaining the position on search engines that it once enjoyed for quite a long spell? Then, this is the time to have a fresh and different look at the site. Do not shrug it off simply by thinking that it is spam that works in favor of such sites. There is a lot more than what meet the eyes.

The webmasters who take it for granted that the strategy that has clicked once will yield good result always are likely to be on the losing side. In order to retain the good ranks on search engines, a quick brushing up is required from time to time. Sometimes, it becomes a tough decision to take, as webmasters do not feel comfortable playing with the design and other aspects of the website that might affect its rank on search engines. This eventually results in making the website stale and outdated, which drift visitors away.

No matter how good your site ranked around 14 to 15 years ago, you need to make your online presence better through occasional spruce up of the layout, templates and design of your website. You cannot expect to welcome repeat visitors unless; the site looks fresh enough to compete with its new competitors. They are quite agile and hungry for a prestigious rank on search engines. Frequent updates and adapting to new templates can help your site evolve and buoy for a longer period with the same vigor that its younger counterparts have.

Before complaining about visitors migrating from your website to the new ones with glossy layouts and crisp designs, have a closer look at your own site to notice carefully whether it is offering the best user experience or not. If not, stop complaining and try to do a little dusting for a revamped look of it. All the innovative SEO efforts to keep your site on top should be experimented on a nicely crafted website. Otherwise, spending money for search engine optimization of an old, outdated site will be like, building a skyscraper on weak

pillars. Some occasional rubs can make your website shine always.

Top 5 Online Tools to Test Your Website Speed

Slow websites will undo all the good work that you do in the online marketing department. No matter how successful your SEO drive is or how buzzing your social media scene is, you cannot make do with a website that takes ages to load up on the screens of users. How will you know the uploading time of your website? Here are the top 5 free online tools to help you test your website speed:

- **Pingdom:** Among the more popular tools of checking website speed, the Pingdom website speed checker is user-friendly and convenient to use. The performance of your website is graded on 100. You have the option of keeping the grades private or making it public to attract users. The performance of the website consists of factors like loading time and the webpage's size.

- **GT Metrix:** The USP of this free online tool to check website speed is that it does not limit itself to showing you the speedometer. There are various other items that provide a unique insight to your website and how it is being regarded by online users. The report generated by GT Metrix includes statistics on the image optimization and CSS as well.

- **Gomez:** This tool requires specifics to be fed in before it can test the speed of your website. Once you type in the details, you will be able to active the

speed graph and get the data that you are looking for. Loading time, first byte time and page size are a few of the components that make up the Gomez report.

- **Google PageSpeed:** The high point of this Google tool is that it distinguishes between visits from computer devices, be it laptops or desktops as opposed to visits from cell phones and Smartphones. The data specifications ensure that you get a fair idea of how mobile-friendly you website is.

- **Web Page Test:** This one is rich in function and variety. It offers you the option to select the browser to test the speed of your website. You can pick between Mozilla, Chrome and Internet Explorer. You can also select the kind of connection you have, something that plays a pivotal role in the website speed.

Some SEO Points Much Discussed

In the world of SEO, some points tend to keep showing up their ugly heads every now and then. No matter how much you try to bury them because of their redundancy in the present times, some blogger or self-proclaimed SEO expert will bring them up to the surface. What usually follows is a discussion that, like every single time in the past, does not head to a conclusion. The first, and probably the most discussed, point in this vein is the interpretation and analysis of Google's updates and algorithms.

Google comes up with some updates and changes that affect search engine optimization directly. Google puts up blog posts or videos to announce and explain those updates. Before the SEO community gets to sink their teeth into the message and the intended purpose of the message, bloggers all over the world are busy giving you insights and scoops that they claim to be privileged information! More often than not, you will find that the updates have not even come into effect and bloggers already begin to tell you how your website will be affected.

Unless they have been on the decision-making team of Google, there's no way they can know for sure what those updates will mean to the SEO world. For example, when the Panda and Penguin updates were announced, or the Hummingbird for that matter, the SEO domain went into a tizzy trying to make sense of those updates. There were clear indications on the part of Google that if you are doing the SEO work right, there won't be any adverse effects on your

website. But such assurances are thrown to the dogs primarily because bloggers thrive on gimmicks wrapped as news.

The same goes for Page Ranks and rankings of keywords. We have got umpteen number of discussions on SEO blogs and forums to thrash it out that these two parameters don't matter in the world of search engine optimization anymore. No internet marketer will pick a website with higher Page Rank if that site is not relevant to the purpose. Similarly, higher ranks in the SERP do not automatically translate into online sales conversions. These parameters of SEO success have died their natural deaths and need no exhumation! SEO is now BRANDING, the way you do it offline, same is applicable for online by means of content & other marketing techniques.

New-age SEO: More about Topics, Not Keywords

The way people search will change, now that Google is looking at this whole scenario in a new light. Keywords, the mainstay of SEO, will not be the defining building blocks in this new scheme of things. Rather than keywords, searchers will get results according to the intention of the question than they ask, instead of the exact words that they use in the search.

This kind of thinking will take the steam out of the keyword issue and focus it more on **topic-based content**. A good idea to do that is to conduct brainstorming sessions for content ideas and topics instead of relying entirely on SEO executives to give you keywords to write on.

This novel initiative of Google means that the over-insistence on keywords is set to end. Many SEO companies have damaged their online marketing efforts because of their reliance on keywords and data based on keyword research. It also ends the supremacy of the SEO department over content writers.

It is really frustrating when well-written content pages are ticked off because they don't adhere to the right keyword density or some similar pre-requisite. The significance on keywords and their use in content has also compromised the quality of writing to a great extent. If you look at those rare web pages of readable content, you will find that all of them laid stress on material and writing, rather than on keyword parameters.

Other sins revolving around keywords, like anchor texts and their abuse, will also take a fair amount of beating. Websites that have built up their strategies for online marketing by relying on keywords will have to rework their plans if they want to fit it. New plans will involve serious thinking about the content that they publish, along with keeping an eye on what kind of topics interest online readers in their domain of work.

Use the social media to find out what topics are trending in your line of business and come up with content that validates the tastes and preferences of online readers. Google has injected a very personal touch in the SEO domain by initiating this kind of searches. It is passionate topics that matter, not sterile keywords.

8 Awesome Tips for New Age SEO & Digital Marketing

After latest Google Panda, Hummingbird & Penguin 2.1, here is a list of 8 awesome tips for the new age SEO & digital marketing. Use these 8 SEO tips to boost your search ranking for your website in long run & stay Google safe.

1. Use schema.org rich snippets /micro-formats for reviews, ratings, products, items, locations, people, businesses, events & more.
2. Use Google+ integrated with your Google places for faster indexing & better search result/rank.
3. Use Google authorship & publisher markup for your website for more author rank & site authority.
4. Use environmental linking within your content, both internal and external to your site, to create a more natural looking link profile.
5. Add Facebook opengraph, Twitter meta card, Google+ integration & other social meta data tags to your website.
6. Use disavow link tool wisely to remove really low quality backlinks. Monitor Google & Bing webmaster tools regularly.
7. Focus only on related & high quality backlinks. Join social conversation. Focus more on engagement & content sharing.
8. A faster loading & mobile responsive website helps in enhanced user-experience, longer time on site, lower bounce rate & more engagement. Both Google and your users will reward you for increasing your site's

performance.

Mobile SEO Equally Important to Google

If you want to make use of Google to survive and expand your online marketing chapter, you need to pay heed to its rules as well. Google has made it abundantly clear in the recent past that mobile SEO is here with a bang and it is slated to stay on. Internet marketers who took a step-motherly attitude towards mobile SEO as compared to SEO for computers have to change their thinking and approach. Without mobile friendly websites and content, your SEO will be severely hampered. An added incentive is the sharp and continued rise in the number of users who tune in to the internet through their cell phones.

Google has particularly pointed out the prevalence of wrong redirects for mobile users. It has often been noted that websites redirect users to irrelevant web pages simply because they don't have a mobile-friendly equivalent to serve up. For example, if you are looking for LED TV on an online store and the website does not have a mobile-friendly web page for LED TV, the redirect goes to a page for TV or electronics or something similar. You don't get what you are precisely looking for because a mobile-friendly web page is not there. Such redirects are not a good idea when it comes to Google.

Experts suggest a way out. If you don't have a mobile-friendly page for a specific search from the user, show the computer-friendly web page itself on the mobile instead of redirecting to irrelevant pages. In the above example, since you don't have a mobile-friendly page for LED TV, give the mobile user the LED TV page suited to a computer. Of course, if you have the time and resource at your

disposal, there is no better way than building up individual web pages tailored for cell phones. The same goes for videos and other web designing trappings. A good case in point is that iPhones cannot play Flash videos. Offer other compatible modes for online videos so that iphone users can watch them as well. It is equally important to test your mobile-friendly web pages for quality of content and web links.

Matt Cutts Advises to Go Slow with Guest Blogging

Are you into thinking that the best way to drive traffic to your website from territories beyond your control zone is to offer guest posts for other blogs? It's time to rethink your strategy a little, if you go by what Matt Cutts of Google has to advise. According to Cutts, you must offer guest posts only in moderation and not go over the top trying to bring in traffic to your website. He clearly states that if guest blogging is one of the main strategies that you have to bring in online visitors, you will be putting the brand reputation of your website under serious threat.

Answering a general query about the difference between genuine guest posts and ones that are written for payment in link building efforts, Matt Cutts said that there was a fundamental difference between them. And that difference comes from the purpose of the guest post that is written. Posts written for links are usually heavy on keywords and anchor texts. The algorithms of Google quickly spot such posts and flag them as spam. However, guest posts written with honest and genuine intentions do not have a smattering of keywords or anchor links. Cutts mentions that while reviewing and checking spam reports picked up by Google, this basic difference is highlighted.

Matt Cutts is of the opinion that guest posts written for authentic reasons are usually by experts who have substantial knowledge in the subject. Because of their domain knowledge, the content is rich in information and low on deliberate

use of keywords. The number of anchor links is also few and far between. Another sign post that tags a guest post as genuine is that more often than not, spam posts have no link between their title heads and the content body. With more sophisticated algorithms working overtime on Google, such spam posts do not stand a chance at all! Cutts signs off with a warning saying that guest blogging should not be your 'full-time job'.

Top 3 Ways to Combat Google's Penalty

The weighty sword of Google comes down heavy on websites or blogs that defy the codes of proper conduct in the online marketing industry. If you try to take Google for a ride, especially in the search engine optimization scenario, you are bound to end up paying for it. It will come to bit you sooner rather than later. Despite best intentions not to rub Google the wrong way, you might find that the competition around you is pushing you astray. Once penalized, it takes a lot of hard work to claw your way back. Here are the top 3 ways to keep your website out of Google's harmful penalty:

- **Remove Poor Backlinks:** It doesn't take much to spot those low-quality backlinks that are not paying you any dividends anyway. These backlinks were probably added sometime in the past when you were desperate for some online visibility. Now that your website or blog is better placed, remove those backlinks that reflect poorly on not just your online brand, but also your reputation with Google. You will find it easy to identify those poor links by measuring the influx of online traffic from your existing backlinks.

- **Backlink Statistics:** The first point gives birth to this one. It is very necessary that you have all your backlink statistics ready with you. Before Google hauls you up for overusing the anchor texts or other digressions, you need to remove or modify them yourself. Do not wait for warnings to come your way. There are several online tools, like Google Webmaster Tools, that give you a comprehensive understanding of your backlink framework. Use the statistics regularly to keep track of your backlinks.

- **Content Management and Documentation:** Most online brands make use of content to reach out their marketing message. It may be in the form of articles, blogs, press releases or website content. Keep a document of content that you publish online, along with the date and corresponding URL. It will be a tough process to keep updating it but when the tide turns against you, you can quickly find out the piece of writing that has irked Google. Include your social media presence in this documentation. Use Google Spreadsheets to update this document.

SEO Best Practices After Google Hummingbird & Penguin 2.1

Visibility of websites on popular search engines is very important, but selecting amongst the SEOs is tough. Many small scale businesses go for local SEO service firms, whereas the global and national businesses go for large scale web marketing companies. The online advertising and web marketing is changing at a rapid speed. Therefore, there is a great need to update and shift towards modern SEO approaches and practices because if the inclusion of fresh approaches and practices to Internet marketing and SEO services is inadequate, then the website owners might suffer issues. So, the traditional and outdated practices require amendments in order to meet the latest system changes that are introduced by the Google's Hummingbird. The updates and changes brought by the Hummingbird and Penguin 2.1 software help the ward off companies that generate spams.

It's not obvious that every time when the popular algorithm updates, the chances of high ranking of websites disappear. The web masters and best SEO companies must follow and implement the most efficient practices and fresh approaches.

SEO Best Practices for the Pre-Campaigning Analysis

1. ***Decide Your Goal –*** it is important to decide that at which market your company is targeting? One must have a deep knowledge of every corporation

target clients by checking out the psychographics, demographic and industrial trends as well as buying habits of the market.

2. *Identify the Personality of your clients* – To decide your targeted audience you need to create identities which shall represent different types of clients. For creating personas, you need to study the authentic market data. This process helps in identifying and understanding your clients and their expectations and demands.
3. *Go for different Texting Strategies –* After you are done with deciding the targeted market and creating different identities of your clients; create a strategy for messaging which will aid in maximizing your incoming opportunities.
4. *KPI's* – Recognize the major conversions which may bring success for the company such as monthly service orders, incoming calls, web leads or quoting request. You cannot track all info, but it is vital to have an exact target to calculate the course of the online campaign.

SEO Best Practices for Research of the Keywords

1. *Recognize the correct keyword opportunity* – the keywords are most important tool which aids in identifying the goal of the company. Wrongs keywords generate no visits, poor traffic opportunity and lack of CTR, as well.
2. *Estimate the intent of the keywords –* All keywords are not equal. It is vital to think and consider analytically about every keyword to understand and decide that which keywords are more relevant for targeting customers and generating traffic. Scrutinize the results for different keywords and understand that where exactly your brand or company fits in. If you find no similar search results then you might be focusing on an untouched opportunity or on any less relevant term.
3. *Check the existing CTR info –* Have a look at the webmaster and SEO tools to check the CTR or Click Through Rates of any term or "Keyword" that can generate impressions. The keywords with highest CTR are those which have given successful results by converting the web searchers into regular visitors or into successful client's leads, too.
4. *Consider about the keyword positioning competition* – Searching for the keywords that display achievable ranking are very important.
5. *Make use of relevant long tail keywords* specific to your niche.

SEO Best Practices for SEO: On-Page & off-page

1. *URL –* The URL's needs to be clean, simple and must have relevant keywords in it. Avoid lengthy strings that contains random numbers, letters and

irrelevant characters like %, ?, &, 3, etc.

2. **_Content –_** The matter or content for every page needs to be natural and unique. The content has to be directly important for the keywords by making use of different synonyms, tenses and similar keywords. It is important that the website content meets the user's requirement and expectations. It must be fresh (regularly updated)

3. **_On-page Structuring –_** It is advisable to break down the content of your website into different sections. It helps the users in quickly understanding and consuming the data. Even, the tags such as h3, h2, h1 can be used to rank the data. Avoid exclusive use of flash and images.

4. **_Links –_** It is a good strategy to connect the relevant sites wherever and whenever possible. One can link to the authorities on different subject matters, covered by the site. Stress only on relevancy & authority, not on quantity. Also interlink your own webpages well with variety of anchor text. Anchor text variation must be there for external backlinks as well.

5. **_Social –_** It is advisable to add a widget of social sharing to your site page. It will help the users in sharing your content on different social media networks. Use Google local, Authorship markup, Rich snippet (Structured data) for your website. Maintain good amount of social share, citations, hashtags & mentions in various popular social media sites.

Hence, these are some of the SEO best practices that help the webmasters. These practices are compulsory to be followed after Penguin 2.1 and Google Hummingbird processing in order to generate more traffic on your websites. With these modern and efficient practices, you can explore better online marketing opportunities and secure great SEO results!

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This post is by Sachin. He is a full time writer and a professional blogger. Sachin loves to write on different subjects such as SEO, blogging, gadgets, insurance and much more. He has also written many posts on gadget insurance. This post by him is a good and an informative post on the above topic.

The New Dimensions of SEO - Search Experience Optimization
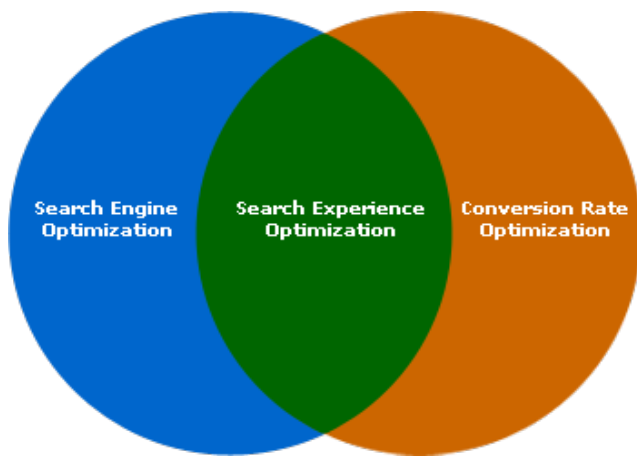
Matt Cutts of Google elaborated SEO as **Search Experience Optimization** and not search engine optimization, as we know it. There is a lot of meaning and significance in this terminology. It defines SEO as we know it and also the concept of keywords. With the new Hummingbird update of Google, where the previous algorithms were morphed into something new and more user-oriented, the world of SEO is about to change for the better. The conventional thinking pivoted around keywords and building up the SEO framework on these little building blocks called keywords is going to change in a subtle, but definite way. Let's explore the new dimensions of SEO!

To begin with the coinage of Matt Cutts, SEO is going to be more about the user experience than about actual keywords. The intention of the user is going to be of more value than the actual keywords typed into the search box. Let us consider an example here. Suppose you search in with "Who won the US Open Men's Single this year?" Google will throw up an answer for you, say X. Now, search with "Whom did he beat in the finals?" The answer here will be Y. That's where the point lies and the difference between conventional and new-age SEO is all about. Let me explain.

In the second search, you are not mentioning US Open Men's Final or the year or the name of the winner, so how does Google come up with the right answer? It is because Google is doing away with just search according to keywords, which in the second case will show up names matching 'finals' 'beat', irrespective of the sport, tournament or year! Instead, Google draws upon the result of the last search, grabs the intention of the searcher and throws up a likewise result. It does not call upon irrelevant searches as it would have if it just went by the keywords in the search box. That is what Matt Cutts meant by search experience. In this new SEO, the perspective of the online users is paid more attention in throwing up search results.

That faster SEO teams start thinking on these lines, the better they will be at tackling the new dimensions of SEO!

What to Consider for Backlinks

It has been universally accepted now that backlinks are the building blocks of your SEO initiative. With the help of quality backlinks you are confident about taming the search engine giants and get your brand its proper place under the SERP sun. There is no harm in thinking on these lines, except that with new update and algorithms flowing out from the house of Google, you have to consider various other factors as well. The most important factors to consider while looking for backlinks are listed here:

- Link to Right Web Pages: You have often heard it being said: you are known by the company you keep. For backlinks this works truer than it does in the case of humans! The value of your backlinks is directly proportional to the websites that you are linked with. If you have the correct backlinks that lead to your website from high traffic zones, you are in a strong position from an SEO perspective. Getting more backlinks is not the key: what matters is the source of the backlinks.

- No More Robots: You have to quit thinking of the backlinks building as something done by automated robots. That is a thing of the past. With the introduction of sophisticated algorithms and technology, Google pins down spam backlinks faster than you think. Before you know what hit you, your website will slide down fast on the SEO pecking order. Think of quality

backlinks brought home by humans and you will do fine!

- Be Sincere: You will surely get quality backlinks from reputed websites if you have a nose for sincerity. There is a lot of talk and negotiation done on the internet so webmasters are wary about even polite exchanges through emails. However, if you are forthcoming and honest about what you are looking for and what you have to offer, it will always ring true with people who matter. Add that personal touch and get in touch with webmasters of websites that can give you backlinks worth a million dollars. All you need is passion and conviction.

Best 5 Tips to Combat Google's Panda

Worried about the dreaded Google's Panda updates derailing your online marketing initiative? You actually have enough reasons to worry about if you are resorting to underhand means in order to boost things up for your website. The penalty of offending the Panda can be more severe than you actually realize. Without the patronage of Google, you will not be able to survive on the internet marketing scene. Here are the best 5 ways in which you can pull up your socks against Panda:

- Avoid Thin Content: By thin content we mean web pages with less than 100-200 words of content. You have to work on the content of these web pages and add to it. Make sure that your content is relevant and complements what is already on the page, namely, an image or infographics.

- Too Many Ads: Panda understands your need to monetize your web pages. But you cannot do that at the cost of your website users' experience. Too many ads create a clutter on the page, making it difficult for the users to get through to the actual content.

- No Duplicity: If there is something that brings out the tooth and nail in the Panda, it is duplicate content. No matter how difficult it may be to get raw materials for your content, by all means avoid the temptation to lift. Make use of a good plagiarism checker to guard against unconscious duplicity of content.

- Improve Quality: Do not compromise on the quality of your content if you want to satisfy the tenets of the Panda. Get rid of hacks doubling up as your content writers. Invest in a good ghost writer and get the best quality of writing for your web pages. It will work well with Panda and of course, your online readers.

- Be Unique: There are no slots for wannabes and me-too enthusiasts in the reign of Panda. You have to tread a different path for your online success. No walking through the safety of the beaten track. If your content is unique and original in appeal, you are ahead of the curve by default. You will also have conquered Panda updates.

Seasonal Link Building: Why and How

It is not enough that you continue with link building for your brand online with the keywords specific to your business zone. While there is no denying the fact that continued link building is necessary to sustain your internet marketing drive, you can see some spikes in link building if you take seasonal events of the calendar within your purview. Seasonal link building is catering to events of the calendar that complements your business and integrating them with your primary keywords.

Seasonal link building is important primarily because of the additional online traffic you will get without breaking a sweat. For example, if you sell confectionaries, why not take advantage of events like Easter and Christmas? Add them with your usual set of keywords so that users looking for Easter confectionaries find you as easily as people looking for just confectionaries. This is a great way to build traffic and using the events of the calendar to your advantage. You can target specific keywords by looking at the events calendar in advance.

To have an effective seasonal link building strategy, use these tips:

- **Demography Research:** Know your consumer base inside out. You must know what kind of events excite them and what they are looking for during that event. That will help you jot down ideas to create and publish content. You can draw up keywords accordingly as well.
- **What You Can Offer:** After you have listed the events of your interest, draw up a list of what you can offer for each event. Think with insight. Look for ideas online. Use this in content when you look for seasonal links.
- **Promote the Content:** When your list of seasonal keywords is ready and content published online, you have to promote your content actively. Start off a few days before the event and build up the tempo in the days leading up to it. You will find it easier to get seasonal links that way.

Make sure your content and events maintain relevancy to the events. Do your studies carefully before writing the content for seasonal link exchange as events have cultural connotations that you have to keep in mind!

Why Do You Need Sub-domains for SEO

Creating sub-domains was not considered a wise idea till very recently. Skeptics had their doubts about using sub-domains for the purpose of SEO. However, because of the need to do something different and break away from the clutter usually noticed in the online marketing segment, some SEO experts are now beginning to look at sub-domains with a fresh perspective.

Sub-domains Help to Diversify

The most common one that is being used to validate the use of sub-domains in SEO is the need to diversify. You cannot put all your eggs in one basket anymore, especially in this unpredictable digital marketing scenario. You want to cover as much territory as you possibly can but in the process your website looks a bit of a mess. Sub-domains can help you segregate your goals and also help you use keywords relevantly. You can plug fresh content in these sub-domains and optimize them with suitable keywords.

Write for Your Audience

If your content is of excellent quality, people will look into your sub-domains as well. You will get a dedicated steam of visitors checking for your sub-domains

and reading your content. But the price of getting that privilege is that you have to write according to the audience and your readers out there. You have to create the keywords that your readers will be interested in searching for. The advantage of doing this is that you will have a clear advantage over your competitors through this process.

Use Individuality of Sub-domains

Treat sub-domains as individual opportunities to optimize your online cause. Do not blow away the opportunity to widen your net to bring in online users. Optimize your sub-domains with distinctive set of keywords that gives them identities of their own. Allow the search engine crawlers to find your sub-domains with a richer variety of keywords rather than find the same keywords used to optimize all the sub-domains. After all, these sub-domains are entry gates to your online destination. What is the rationale of building all these gates on the same side of the wall!

You will find naysayers writing off the use of sub-domains. But what is the point of being in the SEO business if you don't do something different and grab the first-mover's advantage!

How to Know a Good SEO Strategy at a Glance!

Let's face it. There are numerous sites online all fully concentrating on SEO strategies. You land on a particular blog, they'll tell you "building link using blog commenting doesn't work anymore" - you believe them immediately and stop using it. Shortly, you land on another random SEO blog and they tell you, "Link building using blog commenting drove our blog to a Page rank of 6" - you become confused all of a sudden.

As if that's not enough . . . You still see yet another site telling you of another strategy which hopefully everyone will go crazy implementing over the coming months - like it's the best thing since sliced bread.

But really, what's my point?

Well, it's quite simple. I'm not actually saying you shouldn't rely a little on what those gurus tell you about recent SEO tactics that are working. That's not what I'm trying to convey. What I mean is this - you should at least have a way to know, or better put it this way - a means to calculate whether the idea is a "born today and end in trash can tomorrow" or "born today and sky-rocket forevermore kind of SEO strategy" - now that's what I mean.

Once you get that balance of being able to detect when a strategy is lame and

won't last long, then you've single-handedly found out the different between a GOOD strategy and a BAD one.

So like I'm assuming presently, you want to know how to spot a good strategy and a bad strategy just from a glance?

To know this, follow this simple bullet points below -

- **A good SEO Strategy Mustn't be Hard to Rank. . .**

It is that simple. When you have a supposedly good idea of a strategy, then it would normally surpass any algorithm cluster and rank your blog quickly when the "right buttons" are pressed. But when it's a bad strategy, no matter how much time you spend doing and pressing the "right buttons", it won't just seem to answer to you.

For Example-

Driving enough backlinks to "anchor text" which runs straight to your blog will surely get you ranking in a very good position for that anchor text in no time. That's to show that the anchor text SEO strategy is a good practice in this modern time.

And also, as a good SEO strategy, the more you increase the number of links to that anchor text, the faster you climb the search engine rankings till you get to the first page of Google for that specific text.

That's how Pat Flynn got his "SecurityGuideTrainingHq" (http://www.securityguardtraininghq.com) website to the top of Google search within a short period of 2month for a keyword that had a competition of 5,600 global searches per month. And all he did was literally to drive traffic to his chosen anchor text "security guide" which he now tops Google first page for the query.

So you see the trends? If anchor text as an SEO strategy doesn't waste time in ranking and showing you result for your hard work, then it's a good SEO strategy. That's the opposite of a bad SEO tactics. If it's a bad one, you'd rank at the bottom for like ever.

- **A Good SEO Strategy Popularity Doesn't Die Easily. . .**

We know how this goes. You hear of a popular and new tactics which is bringing in more traffic than anything you've ever imagined. Quickly, you rush out to also implement it, only to find that it isn't really working any longer.

Have you ever being in that kind of situation before? Which left you feeling helpless and made you look as if you arrived late to the party?

Yeah, I have too. But just like I said you can find out whether that SEO strategy will last or not.

And how exactly do you do find out?

Simple! By using Google Trends (http://www.google.com/trends) to check for the popularity of that strategy in recent time. If the popularity has been going down since the previous years to this present year, then that means people aren't applying it again and they don't talk much about it like they used to before because it doesn't work anymore.

That alone should be a negative pointer for you to use in marking any SEO tactics along that line as a bad strategy.

Like I said, a bad strategy will dwindle in popularity while a good strategy will surely grow upwards in search popularity and implementations by follow bloggers.

For Example:

Let's take the "blog commenting" SEO strategy. Since when it came out till now; it has and is still growing from strength to strength. Countless and diverse amount of people have given positive feedbacks about how they got high Page Ranks just by applying this one good SEO strategy to their blogs.

So when others heard about such good feedbacks that people were getting just

by commenting on high quality blogs on a frequent pace, they also applied the strategy and also got the same good results - high Page Rank!

And of course, others heard and also applied it - the same thing happened - a spiral momentum was initiated right at that moment; people were applying and re-applying it over and over again. Just looking at this graph below (gotten from Google Trends), there was an insane application of this one strategy starting from 2008 to 2013.
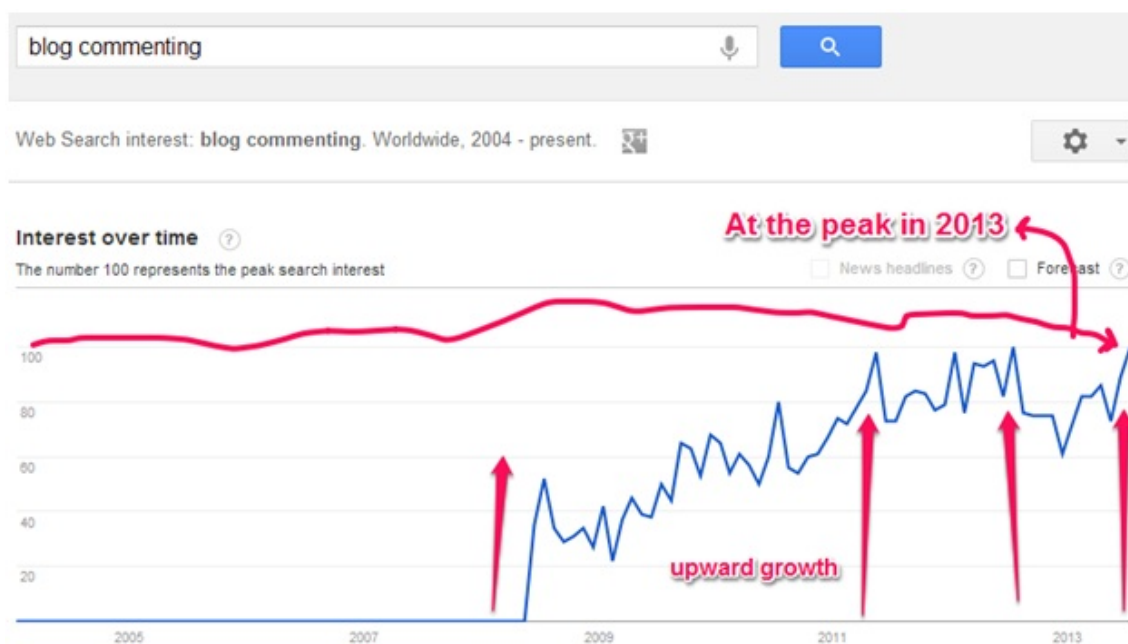
If you look closely enough, you'd notice that the "blog commenting" strategy became so effective in 2012, that in 2013 - it is at the peak right now! (This obviously stands at 100, as measured by using the graph).

So you see? A good strategy gets more popular when more and more people try to implement it because it's actually working. If it isn't working, people won't spend or waste money trying to implement it. And that will cause it to lose popularity at once.

You're still not totally convinced?

Ok. Let's take yet another example. . .

This time, it's from one of the oldest and agile SEO strategies out there on the web. We all know what **guest blogging** is all about. And just like "blog commenting", it's will also fetch you high Page Rank and inclusively get you quality traffic too.

So like "blog commenting", when people started implementing it, good results started coming in a rather unusual manner; because unlike the blog commenting, the traffic which guest blogging was sending became really enormous. Glen from Viperchill.com said he got up to 3,000+ traffic just from one guest post submitted to lifehacker.org; same thing with Bamidele Onibalusi from Writersinchare.com, formerly younprepro.com, who also got 2,000+ from one guest post submitted to problogger.net.
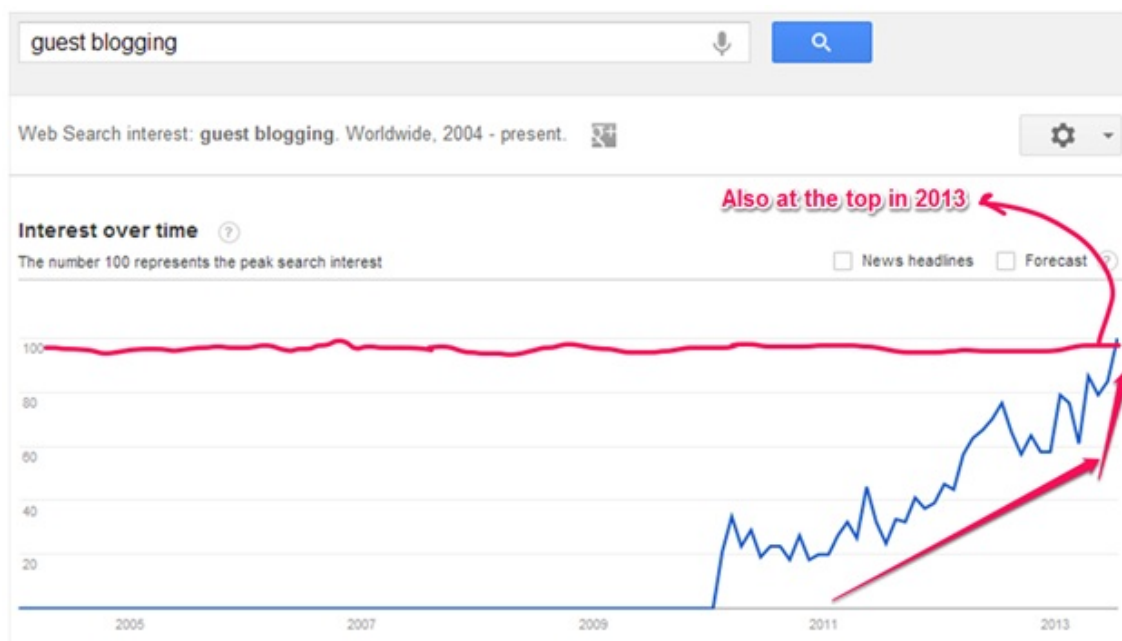
So what happened next? These gurus above and other gurus like them started telling people that guest blogging was the main traffic system then, and like expected, their readers took it upon themselves and tried guest posting on other blogs too.

They got same result and also told their own readers and that initiated a spiral momentum of implementations from other bloggers. This of course helped sky-rocket guest blogging to the top as a top form SEO strategy which has come to stay.

So next time you think of accepting of considering an SEO strategy and going ahead to apply it. You should first look up the strategy up on Google Trends first to see how popular it is at the moment. Doing this will for sure save you a lot of money which you might have ended up throwing away on "rise today and end in trash bin tomorrow" kind of SEO tactics. So be wise.

Make sure to be able to look at an SEO strategy at a glance and figure out whether it's here to stay or not. Look out for past dwindling of the tactics and also look at for how hard it takes to rank for sites using the tactics, before you

can trust it enough to implement it.

Do you have any good strategic way in which you know which strategy is bad and which is good? Let us know in the comments below.

Yasir Khan is a professional SEO and link builder. You can get more information about organic SEO link building from reading my blog. I also offer white hat seo services for small and enterprise businesses.

Top 3 Negative Signals Google Picks Up from Your Website

You have a website that you have optimized properly by following all the diktats of Google. You have a crack SEO team working round the clock for you. Yet, you find that your website is rolling at the bottom of the SERP heap. No matter how much you spend in PPC or how much time you spend researching keywords, the SEO front looks bleak. You are desperate for success. Sounds familiar? Look at your website again. Here are the top 3 negative signals that Google is picking up from your website. Remove them and you are ready for a fresh salvo!

Experts on Board

Your website content is probably written by an expert who knows a good deal about the topic. You hired experts to write for you because your SEO guy told you that Google has twin devils by the name of Penguin and Panda that value quality content. But you have posted these write-ups with a byline that reads 'Admin' or 'Joe'. What ideas does that give Google or even a layman reader about your website? That your website is all smoke and mirror! Why not get the name of the writer published (or even a fictitious one, a real name!) along with a short bio (fictitious but believable should do!)?

Comprehension for a Toss

Google loves fresh content on the website and the attached blog. Hearing this from your SEO guy, you order for content to be published every single day, sometimes even multiple posts per day! Then you question why Google is not paying any attention to the noise you are making in the content department. Easy answer: no one can read or understand your content. Most online companies invest in content farming and fill up their websites and blogs with incomprehensible content. That does nothing for your SEO rank, nor does it endear you to Google's algorithms.

Redundancy is the Key

Content is often tied up with keywords in a way that keywords rule content. Most SEO firms work this way. For them, keyword is the king and content is the consort. It should ideally be the other way round! Your focus should be (because Google's is!) on the quality and variety of the content. Repeating the same topics for the sake of keywords or unnecessarily packing in keywords will not help your SEO cause in any way. Rather it is a counterproductive way of undoing all your optimizing and online promoting because you can never break into the first or second page of the SERP!

Top 5 Keyword Research Tricks You Didn't Know

SEO requires in-depth keyword research and analysis. Most SEO firms and companies make use of SEO executives who are primarily self-taught or have picked up the tricks of SEO from seniors and peers in the company, on the job. There is nothing majorly wrong with that, because of the absence of proper courses to teach SEO and keyword research. The flaw lies in the fact that most of these executives are not aware of the changing face of SEO and keyword research. In this post, you will find the top 5 keyword research tricks that you should know about:

Study your Competitor's Keyword Program: This is the easiest trick in the book to learn keyword research. Carefully scrutinize the keyword research program of your competitors and find out what they are doing right. Their keywords will give you a drift of the keywords in competition and those that have higher value.

Phrase Matching and Exact Matching Keywords: Many keywords can be generated if you take the phrase matching and exact matching factors into consideration. When a user keys in keywords, they often misspell or are not informed enough to use the right keywords. Your keyword research must accommodate these mistakes as well.

Trending Events: Your keyword research must make room to piggy-ride on the trending keywords about upcoming events or world news. You can make use of the trending keywords by following Twitter trends, for example. Incorporate

these keywords in your blog to grab the flow of traffic generated by these trending keywords.

Local Searches: Geo-targeted keyword research is ideal for local searches. SEO companies must consider the use of local search keywords if they want to sell their products and services to local buyers. Geo-targeted keywords are also useful for you when you are undertaking mobile SEO campaigns.

Long-tail Keywords: The use of long-tail keywords is probably the most underrated of all keyword research tricks. You will gain substantial advantage by digging out long-tail keywords from Google Analytics because they are less competitive and more relevant. The precise use of long-tail keywords will get you SEO benefits that take your website beyond the ceiling existing in your domain of business.

Top 4 SEO Audit Tips

Search engine optimization or SEO is not an automated process. You have to keep working on it every single day to achieve your targets. And what better way is there to test the success of your methods than to keep testing the results? SEO audits are absolutely necessary to keep judging the ability of the site to match up to the demands of search engine algorithms. However, you will only be able to get rid of the problems on your website if you follow the proper method of conducting SEO audits. In this post we have highlighted the top 4 SEO audit tips that you can use:

The Title Tags: The title tag stays at the very top of a web page. Every web page of your website must have a unique title tag. Using the same title tag for all the websites will result in a sort of SEO cannibalism where you will be competing against your own web pages for the attention of Google! Avoid that thankless situation and build up unique, keyword-rich title tags that also hold relevancy to the content on that web page.

The Meta Tags: Meta tags are very useful in the context of SEO. They are the ones that are identified by the crawlers of Google. Because they remain at the backend of the website, many SEO companies are not careful about the meta tags that they use. This method will surely affect your SEO process adversely. Use keywords generously in your meta tags.

The Image Tags: The image tags stay at the backend of the images. Google will crawl these images as well when search engine results are thrown up. Why let go of this opportunity to pack in some more keywords at the backend of the website

and the internal web pages. Use image tags that are unique and has a good dose of your primary keywords.

The Content: SEO audits must carefully comb through the content to find out the keyword density and the relevant use of keywords. With Google's Penguin and Panda working overtime, you cannot afford to use keywords arbitrarily. At the same time, your content must be informative and readable. With more sophisticated algorithms at Google's end, the quality of the content will matter in your SEO succes

Top 5 Mobile SEO Traps to Derail You

In the context of online businesses, mobile devices have emerged as important, if not more, than desktop computers. Smartphones are the devices used by most to surf the internet and check out products and services. However, lack of technical knowledge about mobile SEO has derailed many projects and online companies. To steer clear of these mobile SEO traps, we have listed the top 5 mobile SEO traps that can derail your online project. Read on:

Wrong Web Links: This error is common to both the websites built for computers and those specially created for Smartphones. Wrong redirects and broken web links can repel your mobile users from using your website. Nothing is more irritating for a mobile user than a web link that leads to the wrong web page.

Faulty Videos: Many videos are there that are not playable on certain Smartphones. For example, you cannot play a Flash video on the iPhone without tripping over! This is a huge handicap for mobile SEO companies.

Smartphone Errors: Due to technical problems, there are some mobile web pages that cannot be viewed on certain Smartphones. This is analogous to the 404 Error that you find on computers for those web pages that simply refuse to upload on to your computer screen. With this error blocking out the Smartphone screen for some mobile users, your mobile SEO division can fall short of required results.

Invalid Cross Links: This problem is a slight variation of the first one listed here. Wrong web linking is dangerous for SEO in general and much more so for mobile SEO teams. Invalid or irrelevant web links have derailed many mobile SEO projects because the tolerance level of mobile users who visit wrong web pages is so low. Google is particularly severe on mobile SEO links that are wrongly cross linked.

Sluggish Uploads: Mobile users have little time on their hands to go through slow web pages. They will quickly shut down the tab and move on to the next available option. Mobile SEO teams have to be particularly careful about slow web pages and unresponsive websites. Google is wary of such websites as well and slowness can affect your mobile SEO rankings.

Top 3 SEO Quick-fixes to Avoid

There are quick-fixes for almost everything in this world if you are smart enough to pull it off! Believing this maxim, SEO experts have exploited the loopholes and other inconsistencies in the search engine algorithms to try out black-hat strategies and achieve success. But with the rise of sophisticated technology, software and codes, quick-fixes are no more the order of the day. Your website can get into serious trouble with Google if you are caught at the shallow end of the SEO pool. There are some SEO quick-fixes that are suicidal for your online business and website. Here are the top 3 SEO quick-fixes that you should avoid:

Paid Backlinks: Backlinks can get you into the top slots of SERP results and is looked upon as the few means by which a website can get ranked at the top in quick time. There are many companies out there selling you backlinks to make your SEO dream possible. Buy those links at your own risk! Google is particularly severe on websites buying backlinks to claw their way into SERP results. It is a much better idea to work your way in. It takes time but you won't risk getting kicked out for good!

Links from PR Pages: This SEO quick-fix is more an extension of the first one. In this case, overzealous websites buy web links from high PR sites so that they get a greater number of online traffic in quicker time. The spurt in the online traffic

will definitely boost your case with the Google SERP ranks till the search engine giant's sophisticated codes crack your little game. Expect your website to be banned from Google's search results and because Google is the number one player in the search engine domain, your online business will lose a large chunk of business revenue. Certainly not worth the penalty!

Content Farming: This is a term for content churned out just for the purpose of feeding SEO streams. This kind of content is not written with the online readers in mind, but search engine algorithms. Packed with keywords to grab SEO ranks, content farming is a serious offence according to Google. The Panda of Google is particularly designed to catch hold of websites that use content farming material. A far wiser idea would be to get genuine web content on your website and for SEO purposes.

SEO Mistakes from Client's Side

There are some areas where the client's mistake can cost the efforts of the SEO team. The days when you thought that the client is always right are sadly over! In this age of the internet, you can find your well-laid SEO plans falling apart because the client has committed some blunders from their end. Let us make it clear at the very onset that this post is not being written with the dreadful assumption that all clients understand SEO. That cannot happen and that is why SEO teams are hired! With that possibility out of the way, let us look ahead at what mistakes the client can commit in the SEO scheme of things.

Firstly, and probably the most basic mistake that clients can commit is not implementing the changes and modifications suggested by the SEO team. If you are hiring an SEO team for your business, you might as well implement the changes that they recommend! Otherwise the whole purpose of hiring an SEO team is defeated. The changes can be about your website, ongoing SEO initiatives or simply profile pages on social media marketing, if they are blended with SEO. As a client, carry out the changes recommended instantly and place that trust in your SEO team.

Secondly, discuss the goal and objective of your SEO plan with your SEO team. The company's aim is best known to the client. It is their job to share their vision with the SEO team so that both parties are on the same page. Any discrepancies here will mean that the team work will not kick in. The SEO team must not

assume that because clients are less likely to understand SEO, there is no room for discussions. Always remember that the SEO plan is drafted keeping in mind the objectives that the company wants to achieve.

Thirdly, do not abort SEO efforts because the results are not coming in as quickly as you might have wanted. Organic SEO takes time to take off and unless you are patient about it, you might as well forget about this arm of online marketing! There will be months gone before you begin to see the light of day! So be prepared for this and do not give up on your SEO idea too soon. Allow your SEO team to keep on working on it and the wait will be fruitful in the end.

Top 5 Landing Page Tips

Landing pages have a core function to perform in the online sales cycle. This is the make or break point of the process. You have the attention of the potential customer, the person is on your territory with a willingness to learn more and this is the stage where you simply can't go wrong! Unfortunately, most do! To ensure that you get more conversions out of your landing page, check if you qualify on these Top 5 landing page tips:

- Headings and Content: There must be a complete match with the headings, the headline tags and title tags that you are using with the content that you have dished out. If the headlines point to a different stance of the content, your reader will lose interest. You have little time to grab their attention. Do not keep any discrepancy between headlines and content.
- Query and Content: Users come to the landing page because they have generated a query, more probably in a search engine box. They have clicked and come to your landing page. You must ensure that your content on the landing page matches their query. For example, if they have come to your landing page with the query 'How to Make Tea', your content must tell them how to make tea and nothing else.
- Above the Fold Factor: The user must find what they are looking for above the fold, that is, before they scroll down. The landing page should give them what they came for before they have to scroll down. If they have to do so, their interest will flag down and you will lose your purpose. Keep things simple and at the very top of the landing page.
- Sharing the Page: Users like to share what they find as interesting. This serves your goal of reaching out to a wider network of online users. So, you must facilitate this process of sharing by offering share buttons for Facebook and Twitter, if not the other social media networks.
- Track and Test: Do not rest on your laurels when you are working on landing pages. Always keep tracking and testing for results, even when the conversion

rate is satisfying you. You never know when they start slipping away. Regular tests will stem the rot the moment it sets in.

Top 5 SEO Tools You Don't Have But Need

There is no dearth of SEO tools available online. You can never have enough of them really! But, there are really some online SEO tools that you can make use of. These are less popular than the others but that does not mean that they are any less important for your SEO effort. Read on for a quick glance at these new-age SEO tools:

- Link Detox: The perfect companion for websites that have a problem with bad or broken web links. If you had problems with Google about broken or bad links, those demons from the past may come and haunt you again! Link Detox identifies all those invalid web links so that you can break free of the curse from the past.
- iSpionage: The perfect keyword tool for PPC campaigns, iSpionage gives you a good idea about the best performing keywords in your domain of interest. You will get this list when you key in one of the keywords that you are interested in. What's more, iSpionage will give you a glimpse of the best PPC campaigns involving your keywords that have stood the test of time on Google.
- cognitiveSEO: Researching the back links of your competitors will hold a ton of importance when it comes to your SEO keyword research. cognitiveSEO will help you in this department. It gives you a complete analysis about your

competitor websites' back links with a list of the 'nofollow's and the 'dofollow's.

- Whitespark: For online businesses targeting the local market, Whitespark can be extremely handy. It gives you a list of your local SEO keywords related to the domain of your interest. You can build up links with local websites through the help of the data that includes back links and citations. You can also find the Domain Authority, type of website etc through Whitespark.
- Broken Link Finder: Just as the name suggests, the Broken Link Finder will help you tie up the loose ends in your link building strategy. The paid service of Broken Link Finder will help you grab data about broken links in sync with keywords of your choice.

The use of these yet-to-hit-the-big-league SEO tools will enrich your optimization experience.

Spamming is not SEO

Did you come across a claim, or more succinctly a guarantee, that an SEO firm will take your website to the pinnacle of search results in one-month flat? Or for that matter, did you come across an SEO executive who promises to get you the top slots for all your primary keywords in search results? Then you are probably headed for a trap! SEO as white hat practitioners will tell you do not involve spamming or getting to the top of the search results heap in a short time.

The first directive you must follow is read up the spam guidelines stated by Google. These are not best practices. These are written documents about what is acceptable to Google's crawlers and algorithms and what is not. If you fail to follow these dictates, you will be exempted from participating in the SEO process of Google. You will end up doing irreparable damage to your website and online business. So, to remain on the safe side, do not violate the line that distinguished spamming in SEO from genuine SEO methods.

You cannot dominate SERPs overnight. Any source claiming to do that for you is not going to take the right route to success in SEO. Yes, you might enjoy initial success and get some steady traffic to your website. But that will be short-lived and the risk is not worth taking. Google's sophisticated crawlers will catch up with you sooner rather than later. Then it will be penalties galore for your website. You might get cut off from the competition altogether! Surely that is a heavy price to pay for an SEO effort that is all about spamming. Instead, walk the organic way and you will find value for your online business.

Spamming in SEO is all about wasting your money and time, not to mention the risk of ruining your online reputation. These days Google publicly rebukes websites that are into content duplication and spamming or buying back links. Why endanger your online reputation when you can get the same results of SEO success albeit with a little more time, hard work and planning! Get rid of spamming in SEO and steer clear of SEO firms or executives who offer you instant results in SEO.

Top 5 On-Page SEO Tricks that Work

Having a website with terrible on-page optimization is like inviting guests to a dinner and not having the food ready! It is not just the online users that are repelled by faulty on-page SEO. In fact, more than the users, it is the search engine algorithms and crawlers that find it difficult to index your website. You miss out on important SEO juice by not propping up your SEO efforts with smart on-page optimization. Here are the top 5 ways in which you can do a better job of your on-page SEO work:

- **Intros:** Cut down the use of Java and Flash intros to your website. They often block the entry of the search engine crawlers to your website. It's like keeping your doors locked when you are expecting guests. Such intros may make your website look better in terms of design and outlook, but seriously damage your website's accessibility.
- **Addresses:** Have a clear convention on naming URL addresses for your various web pages in the website. Be consistent rather than random and use key phrases or terms in the URL. To distinguish between two words in the URL, use hyphens. There must be some inherent logic between the sections and subsections that make up your website in the context of URL creation.
- **Cannibalism:** Guard against your own internal web pages competing against each other for search engine rankings. Optimize each web page in its unique way, preferably with different keywords. This will ensure that your web pages find the status of individual websites in the eyes of search engine crawlers.

They will individually combine to get you higher online traffic.

- **Title Tags:** Title tags and meta descriptions are necessary for the unique identity of a web page within a website. Following the point on Cannibalism, you have to write unique titles and meta descriptions for each web page so that the search engine crawlers know that they exist as unique web pages.

- **Robot Guides**: Make use of robot.txt files to guide search engine crawlers towards web pages that you want them to crawl before others. You can do that by prioritizing your web pages according to your requirement. It is like a guided tour through your property: you get to pick the rooms you want to show off first!

Top 3 Ways to Ace Local SEO

For local businesses and companies, the local SEO scene is their domain of work. Unless they can tap into the local market through SEO, they will not realize their dreams of thinking beyond the horizons. In this regard, there are some simple steps that you can take as a local business to ace the SEO scene. These steps are even more helpful if you are startup looking to get a toehold in the local market. Read on!

- **Fact-finding:** The first step towards launching a successful campaign to grab local SEO leverage is to check where you stand and what strategies will work for you. You can begin by conducting a search on your own brand. Combine the brand name with that of the city from where you are working or based in. The search results should rank you within the first 7. If that happens, you can conclude that you need to work on link building and other traditional SEO practices to rank. You can also be assured that the job will be easier for you. In the case that you are not ranked within the top 7, you need to look at the next step outlined here.
- **Local Listings:** Try to get your business listed under as many local listings as possible. You must include your name, address and phone number (NAP). Local search algorithms will index your brand favorably if they find you listed on as many local listings as possible. Another advantage of being on the local listings is that you will get the business of local consumers who check up these local lists for contacts to get work done. You must keep in mind that the

information that you provide, like NAP, must be accurate. Otherwise, you will end up missing out on local business.

- **Geo-location:** It is easier to rank in the local searches for a city where your business is actually based in. Google and other search engines provide extra credit to local businesses when they find the address of your company matching the city with the location mentioned in the search. In technical parlance, this is called 'centroid' bais. However, if your business is located outside the city, you will find it tougher to hit the top search results.

Why Do You Need Sitemaps?

So you think that sitemaps are just appendages that you add to your website as an afterthought? It's time to think anew about these ubiquitous web pages that website developers often tend to forget about! Sitemaps can be extremely important in the context of SEO and you will do your website a world of good by evaluating your sitemap and offering the best you have. But why do you need sitemaps at all? That is a question that needs to be answered first.

Sitemaps are guides to search engine crawlers that have the job of indexing your web pages. This is the organic process followed by major search engines like Google. But this organic process of going through your website and indexing the important pages takes time. You may have hundreds of web pages waiting to be crawled. You may also have web pages that have heavy content like videos or real time updates like news alerts. Time is always a factor on the internet. You want the search engine crawlers to do their job quickly and effectively.

Why not help out these crawlers with the help of sitemaps? After all, doing so will only benefit you in the context of getting indexed favorably! The trick to building a successful sitemap that gels with the search engine crawlers is to make a quick list of all the important web pages that you have on your website. List these URLs on the sitemap so that the crawlers can quickly identify the web pages that you want to be listed on the indexes. What's more, you can make the job simpler for the crawlers by adding some keywords to the sitemap for the search engine algorithms to understand what your web pages are all about.

Sitemaps are often designed for search engines only, not for human readers. But you need not subscribe to this idea. Your sitemap can be a helpful guide for online visitors to your website. They must know how to navigate to different web

pages within your website without having to go back and forth. That is achieved through the help of a well-designed sitemap. Users can consult the sitemap when they feel lost within the maze of your internal web pages. In other words, sitemaps not just satisfy the demands of your SEO initiative but also looks after your online users like a friendly guide!

Link Building Tricks you're Missing

Webmasters often miss out on some simple tricks to get more links coming into their websites. These tricks are important to tap because they are opportunities that you don't have to create by investing time and effort. They are already lying there, waiting to be exploited! Go through these link building tricks that you're missing out on and you'll know how to make the most of what you've got!

- **404 Errors:** Nothing is more irritating for an online user when the web page they are looking for pops up a 404 Error. Similarly, nothing is more damaging for your link building strategy than these 404 Error pages putting a stop to the flow of incoming traffic. Check up Google Webmaster Tools for your website and fix the loose ends. Find out which pages are broken links and reactivate those pages.

- **Social Profiles:** This is another trick that most websites miss out on during their link building strategy. Social media profiles of the company on Twitter, Facebook or LinkedIn are great harvest centers for online traffic. If a social media user checks up your company page on Facebook or Twitter, they must not be thwarted there itself. They must be directed to your company website with the help of a web link placed strategically on the social media profile page.

- **Author Bios:** Author Bios are precise and short two-liners about the writer of a blog or article that is published online. Whether you're writing blog posts or

articles for SEO purposes or as guest posts, you have to include your website links in them. People reading your blog posts and articles will be interested in checking up your website by clicking on the web links that you provide on the Author Bio.

- **Online Press Release:** This is the perfect vehicle to get your links out there for people to click on. You'll be surprised by how many websites miss out on this easy, but effective, trick to link building! An online press release goes out to a wide audience, depending upon whether you use free press release sites or paid ones. No matter which one you choose, you can expect it to go out to a wider spectrum of people. Place your web links in the press release. Use anchor texts as well for readers to click through!

Why Long-Tail Keywords are a Better Idea

There was a time a couple of years back when long-tail keywords were very much in vogue. SEO experts found that it takes lesser time to grab ranks on search engine results with the use of long-tail keywords because the competition is much lower. That period gave way to a state of dormancy when the SEO world forgot all about long-tail keywords! In the recent times, however, these long-tail keywords are making a strong comeback. Startups and small business firms are finding it better to use long-tail keywords to make quicker, often better, impact on search engine results.

Why are long-tail keywords working? The answer lies in the psychology of the user who keys in the words in a search engine box. Users treat search engines as answering tools rather than dictionaries. That is why they are more likely to type in questions rather than terms and jargon. For example, a user is more like to key in "How to convert Fahrenheit to Celsius" rather than "Fahrenheit to Celsius". The former is a long-tail keyword that the user feels will take them to the answer quicker. That is where long-tail keywords work better from the perspective of the user. Moreover, mobile searches now allow voice inputs to users. Here too, users ask a full question rather than some specific words.

From the SEO point of view, there are two major advantages of targeting long-tail keywords. One is already mentioned above: lesser competition. With most of the competition targeting keywords like "Fahrenheit to Celsius", you can grab the SERPs on a long-tailed keyword like "How to convert Fahrenheit to Celsius".

This is an easier route to SEO success because it matches the search queries generated by the user. Another advantage is that long-tail keywords allow SEO team to offer relevant searches to users. With the long-tail keyword, you can specifically give users exactly what they are looking for. Your conversion rate improves drastically because users are getting what they want at the very first search!

There will, of course, be more people who use the conventional keywords for their searches. You cannot turn a blind eye to that. But using long-tail keywords will get you better returns when you are running on a constrained budget or looking for a toe-hold in the domain. Once you get some traffic coming through the long-tail keywords, you can target the conventional keywords.

What Will You Choose: SEO or Usability?

This is the debate that has crossed the mind of every online marketer. What should they go for to make their website popular: sacrifice usability at the altar of SEO or vice versa? Before coming to a conclusion, it at all, let us look at both sides of the same coin from an internet marketer's point of view. Suppose you have a website. You want people to visit this website. In order to make that possible, you need to look at an SEO plan for your website. With great effort, you build up the SEO machinery that works for you.

After fighting a grim battle with the keywords and the search engines, your website is ranking well, probably on the very first page of search results on all your primary keywords! You have attained SEO nirvana, so to speak! The results are there to see: a steady stream of online traffic flowing in every day, hundreds (even thousands) of unique visitors every month. However, when you look at the conversion ratio, you find it to be abysmally low. You dig for reasons and find that users are not enjoying their experience of being in your website. The bounce rate is so high because they have not bothered to click anywhere. In fact, they stayed on your website for some seconds!

Why is your well-laid plan falling apart? It is because your website's usability is low. Online visitors hate to stay on at a website that is cluttered, full of broken links and confused navigations. It could also be that users are repelled by that Flash intro you have which you think is a delight but your users think it is a

bandwidth consumer! It's time, then, to introspect and fix these usability hurdles. In other words, SEO will not get you dividends if you neglect usability. Similarly, the inverse is true as well. You have an excellent site and your content has the perfect keyword density, but unless you have a proper SEO plan to bring in users, your website will wither away. SEO and usability are not choices for an internet marketer: both are a necessity.

5 Top Tips for Local SEO

The importance and power of local search is growing all of the time. This is true for businesses of all sizes, both small and large. However, the biggest impact of utilizing local search strategies is likely to be on those businesses that are truly local, aiming to satisfy customers in their community and build their client base in this area.

At the same time, smaller and local businesses are often the ones that know less about search. This can be especially true for those companies that have traditionally earned business through leafleting or a listing in a paper business directory. Local search can be hugely beneficial for such businesses if they have suddenly started to see a drop in enquiries; this is probably the reason why. That said, everyone could benefit from investing some time into ensuring they are optimized for local search. We explored five top tips of local SEO for ensuring you get the results you need.

Local SEO Tip 1: Get Registered

All of the major search engine providers have a business listing and directory of some description. Google Places is the most powerful, but you need to remember that there are other search engines out there. After all, what control do you have over which search engines your potential customers use? Ensuring that you have verified yourself with these search engines will ensure they are happy to provide you with a genuine listing.

Local SEO Tip 2: Look at Local Websites

One of the biggest factors in link building is the relevance of the link. Therefore, it is crucial that you look to build links on local websites, whether that is the town

business directory, the regional newspaper's website, or just a community forum specific to your area.

Taking this course of action helps to persuade the search engines that you are important and highly valued in your area. They will feel the same and rank you higher accordingly.

Local SEO Tip 3: Prepare for Landing

Whether you select a specific landing page to optimize and focus on, or go all out across the whole site with your contact details, you need to ensure you have as much information on there as possible.

We'd recommend the last option; as if your contact details are on every page it is clear to the search spiders that they are important to you. In addition, try something like schema to direct the spiders to the most important information on your page.

Local SEO Tip 4: Be Specific

The trick to success with local search is getting the focus area as small as possible.

Say you are in New York City. Going for Manhattan, for example, or even Lower Manhattan, is probably too wide an area. Tribeca, SoHo, or Hudson Square is an idea of how specific you need to be.

Ensure this is included in your content, page descriptions, tags, titles, and anything else.

Local SEO Tip 5: Across the Board

For the best success, ensure that you're submitting the same information to every directory, and what you do matches your website. For example, targeting Tribeca on some, Lower Manhattan on some, and Manhattan on others doesn't strengthen your position, it just dilutes your impact.

Make a splash with local search and you give yourself a great opportunity to succeed. Don't waste the chance to do so!

This post was written by the team at Bright Local who offer some of the best local SEO tools in the industry.

Do-it-Yourself Link Building for Your Website

For favorable search engine ranks, you need to get your link building strategy in shape. Think it's quite a task? It's time to think again! Link building can be an easy job to perform once you can get the basics right. You can start off by evaluating your own website. What are the pros of the website and how can you bring down the number of cons? Exciting content, eye-grabbing web designing or praiseworthy web interface: what makes your website stand apart from the zillion others available on the internet? In other words, zero in on the USP of your website.

The next step is to find out why your website should be considered link-worthy by more reputed websites. Because you need your web link on websites with a higher online traffic value than yours, you have to spell out how that will benefit the website on the better pedestal. To make your website more link-worthy, invest in better content and online customer service. Get active on social media networks so that your connection with the online customer base is better than your competitors. This will not just get you excellent back-links but also improve the online traffic to your website.

Link building can go haywire unless you have a definite strategy in place. Some websites, usually startups, want back-links anywhere they can! Websites of established online brands can afford to be choosy. Prioritize between quality and quantity. Set your monthly link building goals on the basis of this decision.

Always choose goals that you can measure through numbers and empirical stats. And of course, they must be achievable. Your in-house team will get demoralized if you set outlandish targets for link builders.

Finally, test your strategies for link building on a small scale before going all out. SEO trends keep changing with each day. Your link building might run up against some technical glitch unless you keep your strategy updated at all times. Read up on alerts sent out by search engines for link building teams. Make changes to your content or website if you find repeated feedback going against your material. Bring in a fresh mind to evaluate your website from an objective standpoint. Link building can get you rich dividends in SEO if you put your nose to the grindstone and fight it out.

SEO Must-Haves for Start-ups

The SEO effort of a start-up has to be different from that of a website that has already picked up some following. Start-ups need a kick-start to get a steady stream of online visitors. For that to happen, they need to grab the top slots in the search engine results as quickly as they can and on as many keywords as possible. How can they make an instant impression on the online scene? Let's find out!

Firstly, get your web pages indexed. Index is that storage from which search engine crawlers (algorithms) pull out web pages to publish them as search results for specific searches by online users. Websites of a start-up must make its web pages readily available for search engine indexes. That is the best, and quickest, way to favourable search engine ranks.

Secondly, keep your focus both on generic keywords used in your domain of work, along with specific 'branded' keywords that take your company or brand's name into the frame. That way you will have the best of both worlds. By stressing on generic keywords you can reach out to users already looking for products/services that you are offering. The branded keywords will help you attract traffic of those consumers who know about your products/services and want to buy from you.

Thirdly, keep a close watch on the search volume and the competition on the

keywords that you choose. Higher the search volume, the greater benefit that keyword will provide to your website, provided you rank favourably. Competitive keywords, on the other hand, must be discarded in favour of those that are low on competition. That way you can quickly break into higher SERPs without having to grovel your way through.

Fourthly, lay extra emphasis on quality link building. You can do that by offering guest posts to other reputed websites, along with your weblinks. Make room for weblinks on your website as well to accommodate those who give you backlinks. Quality links matter more than quantity. Have one quality link instead of five low-value ones.

Fifthly, do not compromise on quality content. Keep your content updated, lucid and easy to read. Allow readers to share your content on social media networks. Provide them with easy sharing buttons and encourage them to submit user-generated content. While writing, keep the limelight on ideas and express it well rather than bother about keywords and keyword density.

7 Local SEO Tools You Need to Be Using

The spotlight on local SEO has gone significantly brighter now that more small businesses and entrepreneurs have made targeting specific regions a priority. Luckily, there are several options available to those who are serious about increasing their visibility on the local front. These are 7 great SEO tools you can't go wrong with — if you put them to use.

1. Local Citation Finder

Whitespark is among the leading providers in the market of premium SEO tools. However, it has some affordable solutions, and the free version of Local Citation Finder is one of them. Local Citation helps you find the best place to list your business with the overall goal being to improve your local rankings. Simply enter your location and target keyword, and it will deliver a report suggesting the best citation resources according to the entry.

The free version of Local Citation is mighty handy as it permits up to three searches a day, but you can remove those limitations by upgrading to Pro for a few bucks a month.

2. Yext Powerlistings

Here's a tool that puts the power of automation in your hands. Yext Powerlistings automatically updates your business details across over 50 of the top local search engines, including MapQuest, Yahoo Local, and Yelp. These updates may include the addition of new photos, descriptions, and promotions, on top of basic info such as name, business location, and phone number.

You can scan the web for existing listings at no cost, but keep in mind that this is a subscription-based tool. Despite that aspect, Yext Powerlistings is a nice tool that can help you save a lot of time.

3. Google Places Category Tool

Hence the name, Google Places Category Tool helps you find the categories that best suit your business when submitting it to Google's local service Google Places. All you have to do is enter keywords that best describe your niche, and this tool does the rest. So for instance, a shoe store may want to enter keywords like tennis shoes, sandals, or boots. From there, it delivers categories and synonyms related to your entry.

Google Places Category Tool is as simple as it gets, but comes at the attractive price of free, which is tough to beat no matter how you look at it.

4. Local Report Card

Created by the SEO experts at DIYSEO, Local Report Card is designed to help you understand your visibility across local search engines. This tool uses keywords, type of business, industry, and even objectives as metrics that allow you to get a better feel for where you stand. Friendly (and unfriendly) emoticons — green smiley faces, and red sad faces, give you a quick assessment of what areas you're excelling in, and where improvements need to be made.

Local Report Card is currently being tested in beta, but is free and seems to be getting great feedback.

5.Local Search Rank Checker

Brought to you by BrightLocal, another leading provider of premium local SEO tools, Local Search Rank Checker is similar to Local Report Card, yet even better in some ways. With this tool, you receive access to a report that provides a comprehensive view of your rankings, including those in both local and standard search engines. Moreover, it allows you to compare existing rankings against previous rankings, so you can grasp how your strategy is performing as a whole.

Local Search Rank Checker is a part of BrightLocal's premium package, which you can test drive with a free 30-day trial.

6. Google Local Toolbox

Created by internet marketing firm 51 Blocks, Google Local Toolbox can help bolster your local SEO efforts in several ways. One of its main features is the ability to generate a KML file, a format that is used to display geographical data in earth browsers like Google Earth and Maps. Simply enter the name, location, and website of your business, and it automatically creates a GEO sitemap and KML file on your behalf. The sitemap and KML file are uploaded to the root directory of your site, and then verified in Google Webmaster Tools.

Google Local Toolbox is ideal for making sure your site is fully optimized for savvy local searchers.

7. Local Keyword Generator

This tool can be found on 5minutesite.com, which specializes in free websites for small businesses. Local Keyword Generator lets you create a list of keywords that help you determine what geographical areas you should be focusing on. By entering the zip code your business is located in, the radius you want to cover, and a keyword or phrase, you can get a list of the keywords that best match your area.

Local Keyword Generator is free to use, and even works for those looking localize their PPC campaigns.

Local SEO is deservingly on the rise. With tools like these at your disposal, you can make sure it helps boost your visibility, traffic, and business performance.

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10 Ways to Improve Your Alexa Ranking

Improving your Alexa ranking takes little more than improving your websites SEO (Search Engine Optimization). Just like optimizing your site for Google or Bing, there are two ways of doing it. You can do it fairly fast, but the effect is unstable and possibly detrimental in the long run. Otherwise, you can do it in a manner that is a little less rapid, but more stable as it involves a long-term strategy. Obviously, there is nothing magical, obscure or arcane about the guidelines for improving your Alexa ranking; they are just a series of measures, many of which are known to improve the quality of your site as a result.

1 - Ignore the grammar rules that other articles give you

Trying to write the best possible text, abiding by syntax and grammar rules, is not going to improve your Alexa ranking. The search engines are not so selective that they only admire text with great grammar and sentence syntax. Their aim is to purge their results of websites that have very poor grammar and sentence syntax. They are looking for websites that give the impression that they were written by a child or a non-native English speaker. Don't try to make your grammar and sentence syntax perfect, just make sure that it is not bad.

2 - Post routinely

Many people will tell you to add information and update your website on a frequent basis. This is good advice, but it is more important that you create a routine and stick to it. The search engines have systems that dictate how often they re-read (crawl) your website. If you update weekly then there is a high chance that the search engines will eventually crawl your website weekly. If you update monthly then you should expect that the search engines will crawl your site monthly.

3 - Write consistently

This point seems very obvious. Write consistently as it leads being seen more prominently on search engines. It may also entice many users to add you to their Favorites, so that they may see if there is anything new on your site.

4 - Be careful of mixing up your subjects and topics

In you run a website that plays host to different types of information then do continue, however if your website focuses on just one topic, you must make sure that you stick to it. You can have a website that works on a theme, under which your web pages are host to a number of topics. However, do not try to tackle subjects that too far apart and confusing. Your aim is to become a bit of an authority on a niche, topic or theme, and if your focus is divided amongst topics that are unrelated, you will not earn the trust of the user.

5 - Pick your topics well and be careful of the information you input

Choose well what topics you choose to include in your website, and avoid adding information that you cannot confirm from reliable sources. Of course, arguments and opinions can be varied and mixed, but try not to pass your opinions and arguments off as fact. This is especially true if your site involves information technology and fashion.

6 - Ensure your on-page SEO is complete

This includes things such as filling out your Meta tags, and adding titles and Meta tags to your images. You need to make sure that all of your websites on-page SEO is completed, which includes all of the lack luster and boring on-page SEO that everybody leaves and then forgets about.

7 - Do not copy content

Duplicate content is a big Alexa rank killer. You need to run checks to be sure that you are not the victim of people posting your content and are pretending that it is theirs. Posting duplicate content on your own site can sometimes happen by accident. For example if you have a motto or tag line then you may repeat it on every page. Sometimes a "Printer friendly" function will show up as duplicate content.

8 - Do not partake of Black-Hat SEO

You must not try to directly manipulate your search engine rankings or attempt to contravene the rules and policies of the search engines or your Alexa rank will drop sharply.

9 - Think of it in the same way you think of being an authority

With Google you are able to become an authority site and benefit from a high search engine results ranking, as well as frequent website crawls to check for new information. The rules governing how authority sites are picked are awfully close to the parameters that Alexa rank uses to judge your website. You should try working towards becoming an authority site, so that you may enjoy a higher Alexa rank.

10 - Promote your website as much as you can

Advertise your site and your articles as much as possible. This will bring attention and traffic to your website, which will have the knock-on effect of increasing your

Alexa rank.

Author's bio:

My name is Sonia Jackson. I represent the web-site http://www.essay-land.com. We'll help you to solve all problems with writing different essays and research papers in a short time; we'll answer all your questions and give you useful advice.

Choosing a Domain With SEO in Mind

Most business owners tend to think of branding first and SEO later. They come up with a name, buy the domain and only then begin to consider publicity. This strategy ties back to an older business model based on non-digital marketing. When companies run advertisements in the paper or on television, they bring their brand to the public. Online, however, they must find ways to bring the public to the brand. That one small distinction makes all the difference while transitioning into the new global marketplace.

If you have already selected your domain and established a website, don't worry too much about the possible consequences. If, on the other hand, you are still in the planning stages, there are three key things to remember when picking out your Web address.

Extensions
There are dozens of different domain extensions available. The most familiar are ".com," ".net" and ".org," short for commercial, network and organization, respectively. Anything beyond those three domains is viewed with suspicion by the average American reader, though there are exceptions.

Unless you are part of a non-profit organization, stick with the .com extension. It is ubiquitous and likely the most accurate descriptor of your website's purpose. Although search engines do not expressly penalize various extensions, having a trustworthy URL is the first step toward attracting potential clients and back-links.

Memorability

Some businesses take a direct route and name themselves after their service. An example of that would be "Joe's Plumbing." Others, like Google and Yahoo, choose a memorable name to stand out from the crowd. Which option is best for any one business depends largely on its scope and industry. Local, service-oriented companies do better with the simple approach, while large or tech-oriented organizations can project a more polished image with something unique. Domain names should be similar, if not identical to, the blog's or business' name.

Keyword Matching

Finally, there is some debate over whether or not to implement keywords in a domain name. In the past, Google and other search engines gave a keyword string within a URL additional SEO weight. Unfortunately for newer marketers, most of the best domains were snapped up quickly. Google recognized this inequality and has since eased off. In fact, exact-match domains with low-quality content are now losing their rankings as a result of algorithm changes. On the other hand, a domain name with keywords attached is excellent for linking purposes.

In modern SEO, domains' primary value comes from their ability to gain recognition and responses from readers. Choose something natural, simple and related to your niche. Remember that the URL of a website is just the stepping stone to the rest of your content, where the majority of your attention should be focused.

Author Bio:

This is a guest post written by Paul Teitelman.

Paul Teitelman is a *Toronto SEO expert*. You can read more about the latest SEO trends at *PaulTeitelman.com* anytime.

5 Common Mistakes People Make While Doing Their Own SEO

1. Not Focusing on Content for Human Readers

Despite the fact that ranking parameters have advanced enormously since the earliest days of SEO, many people still think that they can get away with writing shoddy content that won't interest anyone and making up for the deficiency by stuffing it completely with keywords that they think the search bots will go wild over.

Nope; not true at all anymore, particularly with Google, the mother of all search engines. These days, especially after the last year and a half of nearly constant algorithm changes to their page ranking procedures during search queries, the people at Google are far more interested in rewarding pages that focus on human readers and offer as much genuine, informative and high value content to their readers. A website whose text and other content is thin, copied, poorly written or stuffed with an unnatural keyword density not only won't rank highly, it will actually suffer thanks to the much more stringent and intelligent search algorithms that are now in effect.

You have to deliver value, quality and freshness with your content if you want to have well optimized content; keep the keywords to a normal looking quantity, use them where needed to legitimately describe.

2. Failing to Thoroughly Research Keywords

Funny how, just after talking about overdoing the keyword use in mistake 1, we now mention incomplete keyword research as the second mistake. But, that's how it is. While overusing keywords is a big SEO mistake, it's also just as big of a mistake to not take full advantage of the diverse niche keywords you could have on your site's content wherever they have a natural position to fill.

As a DIY SEO campaigner, you're going to want to stick with a natural looking, genuinely descriptive use of keywords, but as part of a well done SEO campaign strategy, you need to thoroughly research your online niche to find the most highly relevant keywords, keyphrases and long tail keywords (keywords that are very relevant but much less searched for than your main words). By creating such a list, you can then strategically use the best, most relevant possible words in your content, Meta descriptions, image attributes and other on-site text bodies. This in turn will eventually give you a decent or even great search query rank for exactly the people that are closest to your target audience -the visitors most likely to convert into sales.

3. Getting started with Black Hat Tactics

Again, a very common mistake amongst site owners who are just getting to know SEO strategy; starting off your efforts with outdated information and either unintentionally or deliberately trying out black hat search spam tactics in the hope that you will get quick results and find yourself ranking highly on Google search in just a few days instead of the weeks or months a high ranking might

normally take to achieve.

However tempting this is, avoid it! Educate yourself on the clear differences between white hat and black hat SEO and stick to the former. Provide value, get your readers to naturally share your content; build links organically by cultivating relationships with other owners of quality websites and build a strong long term ranking that isn't subject to detection and sudden deranking because it was caught spamming backlinks across the internet, manipulating its pages with secret keyword lists or building a link profile by buying the links off of content farm and link farm sites.

4. Forgetting about Structural Optimization

As a newbie, you might find yourself getting so caught up in building links back to your site with other websites, social network SEO campaigns and Content development that you forget about one fundamental fact: Google, other search engines and human visitors will not like what they've found if your site itself is badly organized.

As part of an on-page SEO policy that includes well developed content, images that have been tagged with descriptive HTML tags and well written URL titles you also need to make sure that your site itself is cleanly coded, free of errors and easy to navigate. Make sure that all of your pages connect easily and that your readers (as well as the search bots) can find all of your important content without having to hunt for it. Also, avoid excessive use of flash; not only is it deeply annoying when it freezes someone's computer, it's also invisible to search engine spiders, meaning it won't help your optimization much.

5. Inconsistent SEO management

SEO campaigns are not one time affairs or even short-term projects, they require

constant effort. Optimizing your site will include tactics that you can do just once and forget about them (such as programming your site on clean SEO friendly code) but for the most part, a successful optimization effort is a long term job that will continue for as long as your site is up and running.

You should never stop adding fresh, interesting new content through a blog or article archive; you need to optimize any new images, videos or pages you add to your site and you need to regularly work at creating new backlinks to your pages by promoting them to other website owners or offering to guest post elsewhere so that you can include links back to your site in your articles.

You should also concentrate on consistently engaging your audience so that they trust you, respect your work and keep coming back to it.

About the author: *Carl Petoskey has written for the tech industry for over a decade. When he's not busy writing, you can find him covering Comcast business internet offers or working on his homemade sailboat that he hopes to have in the water by January.*

SEO Copywriting Tips

Creating the best quality content is the only way to improve the performance of your site in the major search engines. To determine the relevancy of a page for a given query, Google algorithm uses more than 100 parameters. And that's where the importance of SEO copywriting comes in – you need to learn the art of writing search engine friendly content, which will also help you to get more number of back-links for your website. This includes the frequency of keywords and title length as well.

The following are some tips that will help you to write a killer content for your site:

*The online readers hardly read pages they just scan them. Therefore, you need to make your content interesting. Use language, layout, images and color to make the content look attractive. It must have a **billboard style of design** to attract the online readers. And while doing so give special emphasis to your visuals including photographs, slidedecks, infographics, artwork, charts and graphs, and video. However, do not buy stock or steal images off from the web. Rather, add original media in the content. An original and interesting hand-written graph will attract more number of readers than using a free or paid image.*

Headlines are equally important for a powerful SEO copywriting. Headlines make a promise to your readers. So make sure the headline is in sync with the body of the content. Also use the h1 tag for your content title; this will make Google and the other search engines take it extremely seriously. However, make sure the same words that you are using in the title are also present in the body of the content. It helps the search engine to give more focus on the chosen keywords. In addition, use h2 tag on your sub-headings; if applicable, use h3 tag on the sub-sub-headings. Google and other search engines give respects to articles that are hierarchical.

Another powerful SEO copywriting tip is to **cross-link your pages**. It is a great way to share the PageRank among the articles on the website. This way, no page will outperform the others. While interlinking your pages use contextual links with relevant anchor text for the target page. In fact, it is a smart way to tell Google and other search engines what your pages are about, apart from spreading the PageRank over your websites.

In addition, provide links to useful sites. Google as well as other search engines give importance to pages with quality outbound links. However, the sites that you are providing links to must be relevant to the content of your page. Also, make sure that Google or other major search engines have not penalized those sites; otherwise, your page will be penalized as well.

Video Content & SEO Strategy

We know how search engine ranking depends on unique content. And I'm pretty sure your business website already has some well-written pages, especially with the Panda updates looming around. Unfortunately, many well-made websites overlook the significance of media-rich content even though they are much more interesting to watch. Besides, media-rich content are one of the best engaging factors for the web visitors. Thus, it is highly recommended to create and deploy media-rich content on your company's website. They even play a great role in your SEO strategy. The most common use is to optimize video content related to your business in your website as well as YouTube channels. However, make sure the video content is searcher-friendly. It helps to boost your search engine rankings. Easier said than done, optimizing video content for better search ranking needs to follow a few best practices.

To begin with, make sure you are using a high quality video footage. In addition, the quality of the video must be at par with the entire website as well as other media accounts. Keywords too are important, just like any other SEO content. In fact, for marketing video you need to optimize them with proper keywords in order to strengthen their online visibility. Again, you must be very cautious not to overuse it, as it will result in reducing the quality of the video content.

Next comes adjusting the sitemap of your business website while you are adding a new video footage. In case you fail to add the new video footage to your

website's sitemap, it will surely lead to numerous SEO errors. In general, the video content will be indexed and linked automatically as soon as you upload the footage to your website. However, it is highly recommended to alter your sitemap manually for the new content.

Another important aspect of marketing video content is having SEO-friendly video URLs. The SEO guidelines for any other general web page are also applicable to video content. Videos embedded on your site must have clean and SEO-friendly URLs. Also, include the video format file extension such as .WMV, .FLV, and .AVI relevant to your video. You should even embed the videos properly and avoid the browser pop-ups. This will help the search engine bots to find the video object easily as they crawl the page.

Placing a highly optimized video strategically on YouTube as well as on other social media sites helps businesses to go viral in the digital sphere. It helps businesses to improve their online presence, by boosting the company's SEO efforts.

A Handy SEO Checklist

Often, when companies choose to tackle an internet site redesign, these people do not think about natural as an important a part of the overhaul procedure. Sure, your new website might appear attractive -- and looks are a crucial "quality signal" within the post-Panda era- but it is also got to possess SEO mojo to carry out and outrank your competition.

Suggestions to make Search engine optimization to your web site overhaul.

Conversion/Sales Objectives

Do you know the primary conversion objectives for that website? Online buy? Phone call? Newsletter sign-up? Ensure that the paths to those are the very first stuff that draws the eye. It is also a part of SEO

Related reading - SEO with conversion optimization

Title Tags and Meta Description Tags

Add distinctive title and meta description tags to the home web page and each web page of the website; incorporate a call to action, advantage statement as well as key phrases within the tags.

Content material

Include a minimum of 250 words, or even ideally 300-400 phrases, of distinctive copy around the home web page and each web page from the website. Add 1 label to get a heading and a minimum of two tags for sub-headlines on the home page and each web page from the website. Consist of key phrases in all h2 tags. Add links upon key phrases to internal WebPages inside the physique content. In the finish of articles and blog posts, consist of links to associated URLs to encourage individuals to remain in your website longer.

Related reading - *Use of keywords in web content heading*

Navigation

Consist of key phrases in navigation links whenever possible. Use Html code text or CSS for crawlable/indexable links; avoid Ajax and Flash navigation. Consist of breadcrumb links near the top of the page to show the path to the web page. Consist of a website chart web page inside the footer of each web page.

Usability

Place essential textual content and page components above the fold (inside the first screen duration); research have shown that customers often don't scroll lengthy pages. Does the brand new website possess the "stickiness" element to make guests wish to remain some time? A decreased bounce rate, along with elevated web page views can help your website within the post-Panda era.

Check our *Usability analysis service*

Web addresses

It's greatest not to alter the URLs when the website is established and ranking well. If Web addresses should be modified - or if some present URLs are not however indexed and so you have chose to optimize those URLs -- make sure to add 301 redirects towards the new URLs. Make the most of the chance to add key phrases to new URLs, too.

Code and Images

Streamline the code so the search engine spiders will find and concentrate around the essential info (hint: use CSS and maintain it and any JavaScript in

external documents). If using Google Statistics makes sure the tracking code continues to be in place during any improvements. Consist of SEO ALT tags along with key phrases upon all images. Use pictures sparingly and optimize them for quicker load time; web page speed is now the Google position element.

Social Media/Buzz

Make social networking buttons prominent to motivate sharing. Does not your investment Google +1 switch! Even though there are lots of elements to think about whenever optimizing websites for Search Engines, it's greatest to focus on the elements over which you've the majority of manage; namely, your web page code! Search engines like Google send spiders out into the internet to decipher WebPages of content material and determine how you can rank all of them for related searches. Your own web page, therefore, ought to make it easy for these engines to know the content you're attempting to convey. Consider it as visitors scanning the actual web page quickly to know it's which means.

Related reading - *Things to analyze before your SEO campaign*
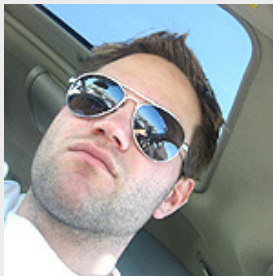
Jamie Cody is a freelancer who writes for CenterNetworks.com and who can't wait for the latest iPhone to be released. Read this Fatcow review to see why everyone loves this hosting company, and why CenterNetworks thinks so highly of them.

Difference between Google's Panda and Penguin
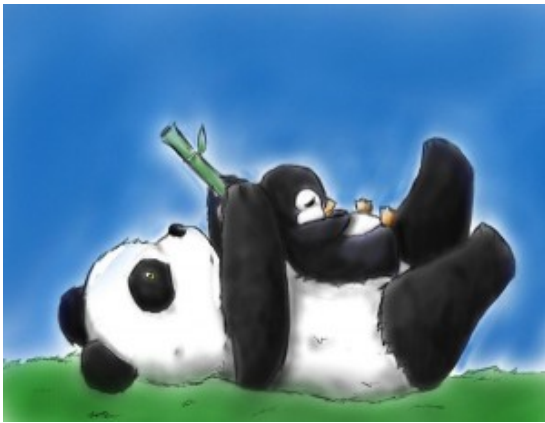
Google's Penguin updates seem to have brought about a tsunami in the online world. There are widespread speculations about Google's new Panda and Penguin algorithm. Many webmasters feel they have been unduly penalised. Penguin update has been in news and great minds are pondering the effects of this algorithmic change. Just a few months back the webmasters thought they had finally solved the riddle of Panda update. Seldom did they know Google would come up with a new challenge for them. According to many, if Google's Panda update was dangerous for online businesses than Penguin update is uglier and more dangerous. Penguin seems to be more penalising then Panda. So let us compare these two algorithms and find out what they actually represent.

Google Panda Update

Panda update is a good old algorithm which has been around for quite some time now. Google Panda update looked to penalise sites or blogs that had poor quality content in them. This algorithm works in a complex manner calculating the relevancy and quality of your content. From its onset Google has been in favour of adding value to online time of users. What users want from Google is good result pages that provide them with quality information and solve their

problems. Panda update was looked by the experts as a way for Google to create world's largest authentic information library. Google denounced many sites and blogs having poor content. They felt these could be sacrificed for the larger good of online users. But the blog and site owners represented a different story. Last Panda update was done on April 19, 2012. By this time webmasters and SEO experts had found out ways to counter their situation. One of the best remedies to overcome ill effects of the Panda update was to fill your site with good content. You might have been victimised if you participated in link exchange or link networks. Getting links from reputed sites was hailed by Google but sites with links from link farms were denounced. Webmasters purged their sites by removing links from doubtful pages.

Google Penguin Update

It is the latest algorithmic change for judging blogs and sites. The prime purpose of Penguin update was to remove all spammy sites. These sites were removed from the search results. Some webmasters might be smiling as they feel their site does not have any spam, you should double check. Many excellent sites have been hit hard by the Penguin update. Over optimisation of sites is a crime according to Penguin update. The worst scenario: Google will not reconsider indexing these sites even if you prove that your site is genuine. To counter negative effects of Penguin updates you should regularly monitor your link profiles. Only relevant links from niche based sites should be kept. Your content and links should appear natural otherwise you may incur the wrath of Google.

In a bid to stamp their authority and prove they offer the best search, Google is out to eliminate all poor content from their search results. You have to play by the rules and use only White Hat SEO tactics to prosper.

Author Bio

Ericka Jonathon is a freelance content writer by profession. She finds immense pleasure in writing search engine optimisation related articles.

Link Building is More of Content Marketing

Link building is gradually becoming more of content marketing. In fact, content marketing itself is just another term widely used for link baiting. All you need is some outstanding content and submit them in various directories and bookmarking sites. If your content is compelling, soon people will start linking to you. And it is just not articles, blog posts and social media conversations are the actual place from where the links come alive. In fact, the market for articles is gradually slipping away while social media is taking the hold. Therefore, your blog is the place where you need to focus the most to increase the number of back links of your site.

The best way for link baiting using your content is to say something compelling as well as fresh. Both the search engines and marketers cry for fresh, unique and original content. Nevertheless, the content you are using is hardly likely to be original. In most cases, they are rephrased or rewritten from other people's content. In fact, it is not even possible to create a wholly original content, unless the writer has an exhaustive knowledge of the particular industry. The key here is to be original in word choice and order, at least for the search engines. Also, make the content sound fresh even if you are rewriting other's work.

The best solution is to give your own business insights and opinions to make the content sound more interesting and original. It is recommended to start writing your own blog posts as you can use your experience, knowledge and reputation – being the figure of influence in your particular industry. This will also help to think clearly, as you discuss the issues affecting your industry through your blog. The result will be some interesting posts attracting the attention of your readers.

Going back to link building and content marketing, there is no difference when it comes to practical upshot. However, the difference is on the emphasis on social media instead of emphasizing on the traditional SEO streams. Since Internet marketing these days is mostly comprised of social media marketing, we can safely say, "Content marketing is the new link building." And this transformation

has turned the link builder into a link creator. The revolution has once again congealed the age-old saying – Content is king. All you need is to create the best content to keep the snappiest and informative readers under your control, which in turn, will help you to create back links for your site.
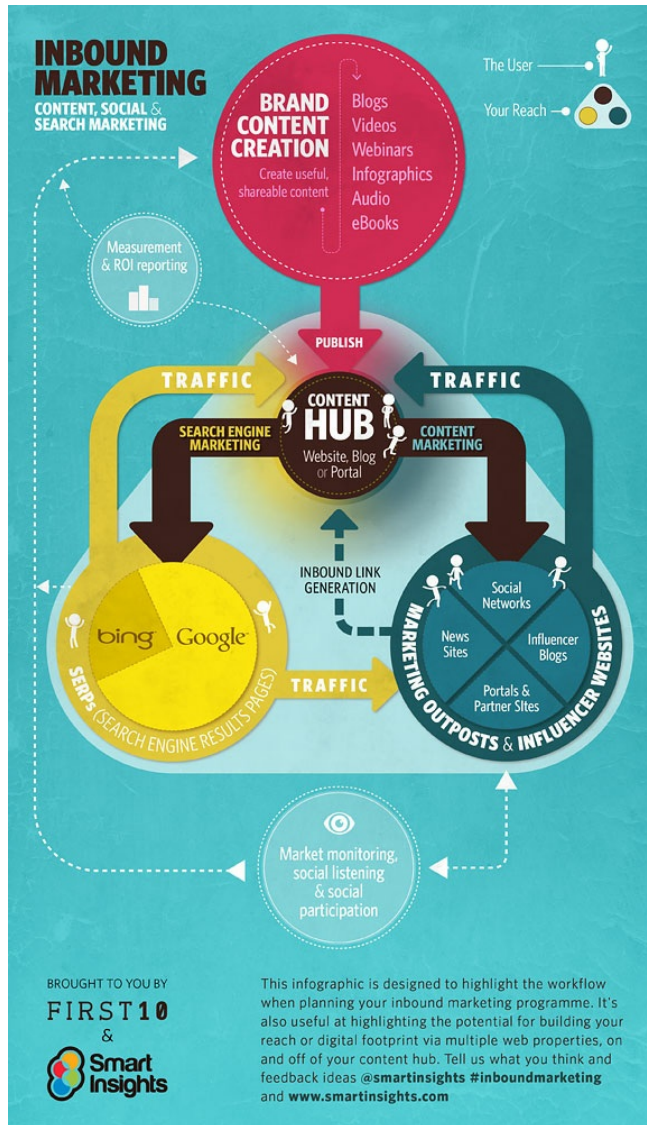
Why do You Need an Efficient Content Management System

The Challenge

Content management is a big challenge for most companies. Over the time, your website is likely to get clogged with huge volume of content, making it impossible to be managed or tracked. And things get more complicated for companies, who are about to outsource the development part of their website. Here comes the importance of Content Management System – our savior when it comes to track and manage content.

What is CMS

Content Management System or CMS, as it is popularly referred to as, has simplified the hideous task of managing content with all checks and balances. It also helps in the overall maintenance of a website. For the ease of managing content, almost all the web development companies are offering CMS based applications for their clients. In addition, CMS based applications also help in maintaining uniformity within the site.

Common Problem

Generally, a website is developed in various phases as individual pieces and by different departments. As a result, the different areas of the site may differ in their appearance. Such websites lack in uniformity, raising scopes for doubt up to the extent of affecting its validity. Thus, the seamless transition between one part of the site and another is essential. And this is where CMS offers the best available solution.

What to choose

However, you need to consider your requirements while opting for a web development service provider. Consider the type of CMS you want, as there are a wide range of applications available such as Drupal, Joomla, Wordpress, Alfresco, and many more. And every content management system comes with its own set of features and advantages (also disadvantage). Better yet, Drupal, Wordpress, Joomla, and Alfresco are open-source software.

Though Wordpress is one of the most popular and powerful CMS, Alfresco works great as an enterprise-grade CMS. The latter too can handle various tasks such as document management, complete website management, and records management brilliantly. Joomla too works well for small businesses due to its low technical demands. It is also highly flexible and provides a lot of scope to work. All these content management systems ensure that there is a proper collaboration between a standardized content platform and the user to display the data accurately.

The cost

However, there are some hidden costs involved with the CMS. Of course you don't have to pay for the CMS, as there are available free of cost, but you need to train your team members about the content management system. Also, you need to manage correct server configurations and buy support to run it effectively. All these will cost you a little, but the end result would be a professional website with uniform look and feel.

CMS Infographics

Source: TheTechScoop

The power and growth of WordPress

Source: SimplexStudios

The Importance of Keyword Research

Speaking of keyword research, it is indeed the life support system of online marketing. Though it involves some kind spying over your visitor's search behavior, digging up such terms and phrases (and to target them correctly later on) is the most critical job for achieving higher search ranking. In short, keyword research is the study of your visitor's search behavior that helps you to make a strategic marketing plan to increase your return on investment.

An accurate keyword research on the specific industry lets you understand and (even) predict the market scenario, including the shift in the demand and change of market trend. It helps you to understand the facts that motivate your visitors to become a buyer. Thus, you can come up with products and services that your visitors' are actively searching for. This, in turn, will help you to increase your overall sales and market exposure.

However, you need to target the realistic keywords that help in the conversion in your niche market. And this is where the long-tail keywords come in use. For example, you have car repairing business and serve the local market. Will it be of any use to target for keywords like "Car Repairing" or "Car Repairing Service" to rank internationally? Of course not, what you need is the top ranking in your niche market. This way, you are being specific to the market that you are serving and is also geo-targeting your potential visitors. Thus, "Car Repairing Service in Seattle" will be a better choice of keyword, if you are a Seattle based car repair company.

Another reason why I prefer long-tail keywords is the limitation in time and resource, at least in the initial phrase. They are specific, geo-targeted, and less competitive. In other words, it's much easier to optimize your site with long-tail keywords that help you to obtain relevant visitors. However, there is no-way I am saying short-tail keywords are not worth investing. They help you to gain a global exposure if you can manage to gain higher search ranking, but they are time-taking and expensive as well. The trick is to combine the short-tail keyword into

your long-tail keywords strategically to pull amazing number of search per month. For example, "Car Repairing Service in Seattle" or "Cheap Car Repairing Service in Seattle" is a keyword that includes that much-searched short-tail keyword, nevertheless being more specific.

Never limit your keyword research only to your competitors' website. They are important, but also focus on the most searched terms/ keywords in your Google Analytics. In addition, there is the traditional way of finding keywords – the online keyword suggestion tools. Also, communicate with your existing and potential clients through web chat, social media, reviews, and forums to find more such associated words or phrases for your products. All these sources will provide you with some keywords that ensure the maximum possible coverage for your product and services.

How to do a keyword research

Source - Promodo

Ecommerce SEO Tips – Playing with Content

As a marketer, we all know the importance of search engine optimization for a business website. Though there are many best-practices, it is no way an easy task. And the challenges are more when it comes to optimizing e-commerce sites. It is utmost important for an e-commerce site to get higher rank in search engine results to get more visitors. The following are some content writing tips to make your online store visible on the top search results:

Content is the king – Yes! For e-commerce sites as well content or rather unique content plays the crucial role. Every product and category pages need unique content, if you want your online store to stand apart. Google or any other search engines value interesting and unique content, when it comes to determine the value or relevancy of the site, for higher ranking. In fact, Google's Farmer/Panda, launched in early 2011, favors sites that have original content.

Well-written content will also help to persuade the visitors to become a buyer; thus, improving your sales. So, the next time you are adding a product description, write your own description, which can be more like a review or focus on its advantages rather than bluntly copying its features or the manufacturer's description.

Duplicate content can be another issue with e-commerce sites. However, duplicate content issues work on a different note for the online stores. To make these sites user friendly, the e-commerce sites allow the visitors to sort product lists by numerous parameters including price, product rating or popularity. Though such features make it easier for your visitors, it can create major challenges for SEO. By sorting products you are actually creating multiple pages that have same content; as far as the search engines are concerned, you are duplicating content – a big no-no for search engine optimizers. Search engines never consider these pages as valuable, which will weaken all your SEO initiatives.

Though it will take a lot of time to fix this, you can at the most use Webmaster Tools to tell Google about the sorting. In addition, create category pages for broad keyword phrases that your visitors are likely to use. Also, add product-specific pages within each and every category to boost your SEO initiatives with proper and interesting content. Apart from attracting Google and other search engines, these category pages with unique content based on broad keywords will help the visitors to find the information they are looking for quickly, which in turn, are most likely to turn them into buyers.
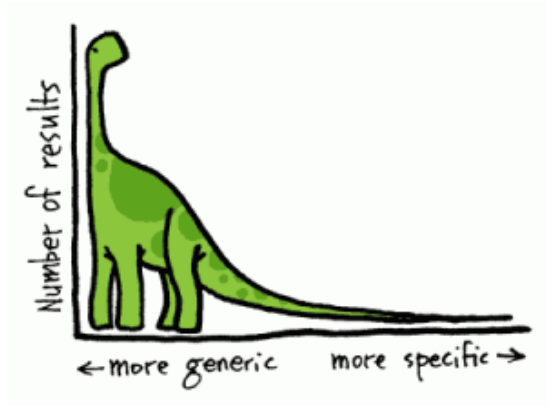
5 tips for optimizing an eCommerce product detail page

Source: Elliance
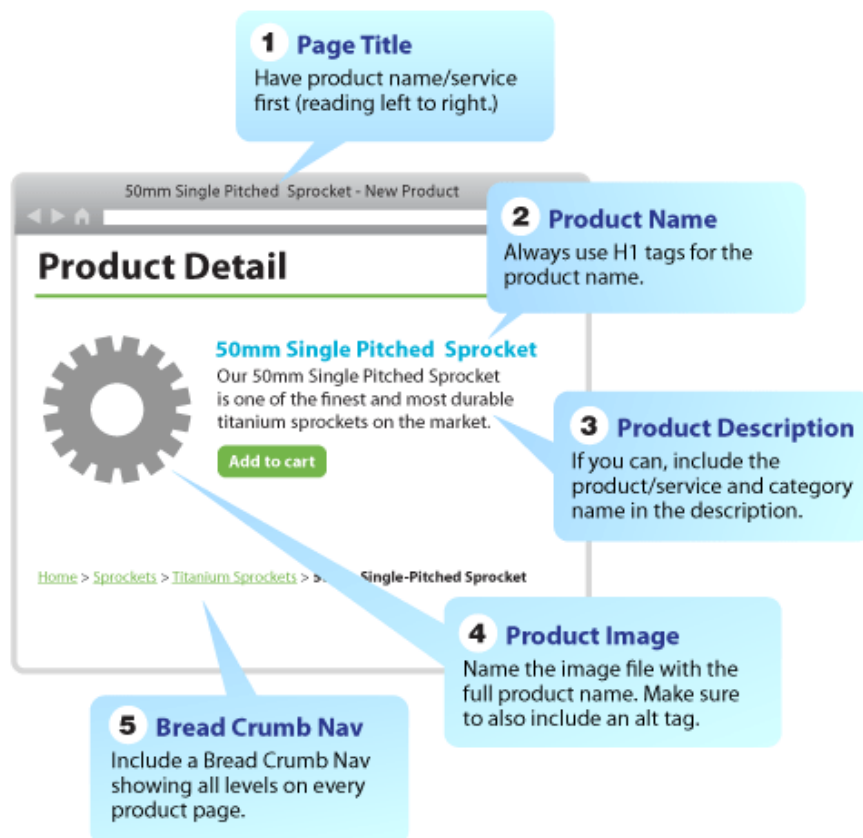
How to Optimise for Long Tail Search

In their bid to attract customers many businesses chase search phrases used by lots of people. I'm talking about phrases such as 'car insurance'. These could be thought of as headline search phrases.

The problem with this approach to securing web traffic is the competition for these headline search phrases is often intense and website owners can spend a lot of time and money chasing them, often for little or no return. In short the competition is just too stiff.

So what to do?

Along with headline search phrases there are many more search phrases used less frequently but when added up their total exceeds those of the headline searches. This is referred to as the long tail of search but let me explain by using our earlier example of 'car insurance'.

Let's say there are 2000 searches every day using the term 'car insurance'. Along with these searches there will be searches such as 'need to insure my car' or 'cheap way to insure my car'. Added together these long tail searches represent the majority of searches relating to car insurance.

These phrases are not referred to as long tail because they are long, they are

referred to as long tail because they are used infrequently. It's perfectly possible for a long tail phrase to be short!

At this point you might be thinking the way forward is to find lots of long tail search phrases and create pages optimised for them. You'd be wrong. This is a common misunderstanding with respect to long tail search and although some people believe this approach is valid I'm not one of them, and this is why.

By definition long tail search phrases are not used very often. If a phrase is used often it's not a long tail search phrase, no matter how long the phrase might be. Remember, the term long tail doesn't refer to the length of the phrase!

So by now I'm hoping you are wondering just how you can include a long tail strategy in your search marketing efforts.

The secret to securing long tail search traffic is simple, it's content, lots of content.

By creating lots of great content you will be using lots of long tail search phrases naturally. This doesn't mean you should be researching long tail phrases and adding them to your content in the way you might if you were chasing headline search phrases, it means you should just write naturally. By doing this you will use phrases people use when searching and over time your pages will attract search traffic.

This approach to search marketing requires commitment. You need to decide you want to add some value to the subject you're involved with, but it's a strategy that will not only send you valuable traffic, it's widely accepted long tail traffic can be extremely valuable, but it will also build your site's perceived overall value and authority.

In a competitive on-line world a long tail strategy is well worth considering and hopefully this information will help you to create a successful one.

About The Author:

*This is a guest post written by Dave Robinson. **Dave Robinson** is the managing director of Scottish web firm **Red Evolution**. When he's not doing web stuff he can be found either ballroom dancing, playing the drums or fighting fires.*

Interlinking of Web Pages Helps SEO

There is more to a website than the Home page and the Services page. SEO services often concentrate wholeheartedly on these two web pages. They optimize the back-ends of these pages with the best keywords. The entire SEO campaign is focused on getting visitors to these pages. As a result, the other web pages lose out on traffic. From a smart search engine optimization perspective, this is like putting too many apples in the same basket. If the pages do not make the kind of impact it is expected to, the SEO efforts look lackluster.

Interlinking of web pages helps to pan out the online traffic over the whole website. You can create interlinks between the web pages through navigation links in the form of anchor texts, breadcrumbs that you find on the top of each web page to help the online visitor find out his position on the website instantly, subject area web links and the individual web page links. With the help of these links, an SEO initiative can ensure that the online traffic is being spread out over all the web pages. You can never say for sure which web page can convert a potential lead into a sale.

Related reading - Contextual Link Building Service – A Successful SEO Strategy

The use of interlinking among the internal web pages also helps SEO efforts. Search engines prefer a web page that is well-connected with others internally or externally. The crawlers of search engines like to rank such well-linked pages favorably in SERP results. From a non-technical point of view as well, interlinking is crucial for the success of an SEO campaign. Your website will not benefit by allowing the online visitor to stagnate to the two pages that form the crux of the SEO team's efforts. The visitor has to be navigated to other pages on the website as well. Interlinking takes care of that.

Author: *I am Susan Hannan from Exams Key; it gives 100% CA0-001 Test. Let's take benefit of 200-530 Test material efficiently and get guaranteed success. Check out free demo of all certifications Exam.*

Use Images for the SEO Advantage

Every major search engine has an 'Image' section that SEO services team do not always make use of. There is little doubt in the fact that an image can speak a thousand words. In terms of search engine optimization as well, images can be effectively used to get online traffic to the website. People are choosy about images, more than they are about content. If the image appeals to them, they click on it and visit your page. The appeal has to be instantaneous. That is something that your web designers have to work on.

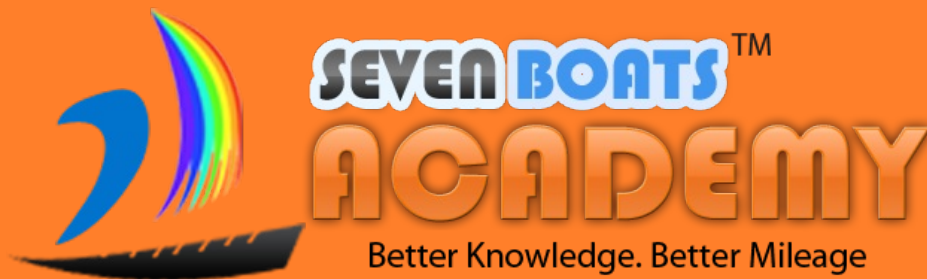*Related reading - Hire a remote web designer*

To be visible to the online users, your website's images have to be optimized through the use of relevant keywords. It is the job of the SEO services department to ensure that every image used on the website is properly optimized with keywords. Alt tags and descriptions at the backend of the images will have to be used. The purpose of optimizing images is that online users do not look below the fold when searching for images. Very few of them actually

scroll down and select an image. They prefer to click on an image that comes on the top of the page, much like the way they click on web links that are on the top of the search results.

The SEO team also has to take care to mention the height and width of the image. It helps the web browsers to upload the image in quicker time. If images are an integral part of your SEO campaign, route them to a separate landing page. Images must always be accompanied by anchor texts so that users know where they are headed. Because of their ability to connect with the online users instantly, SEO services can make use of images in a bigger way.

Related reading - How to optimize landing page for better conversion?
Author: I am Susan Hannan from Exams Key; it gives 100% 4A0-100 Test. Let's take benefit of 4A0-103 Test material efficiently and get guaranteed success. Check out free demo of all certifications Exam.