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How to do SEO:
The Ultimate Guide

EVERYTHING YOU NEED TO KNOW **FOR A COMPLETE SEARCH ENGINE OPTIMIZATION GAME PLAN.**

Investing in SEO is alluring because you know what you stand to win—free organic traffic.

But there's a real risk that your efforts won't pay off—and you'll lose precious time spent on a fruitless attempt.

Knowing how to do SEO and finding where to start can feel overwhelming because of the many moving parts that are involved.

So many times marketers set out to demystify SEO. They take a stab at it—optimizing for SEO and writing the so-called great content that "experts" tell them is the secret ingredient to success.

But then...*nothing* happens.

It's such a downer.
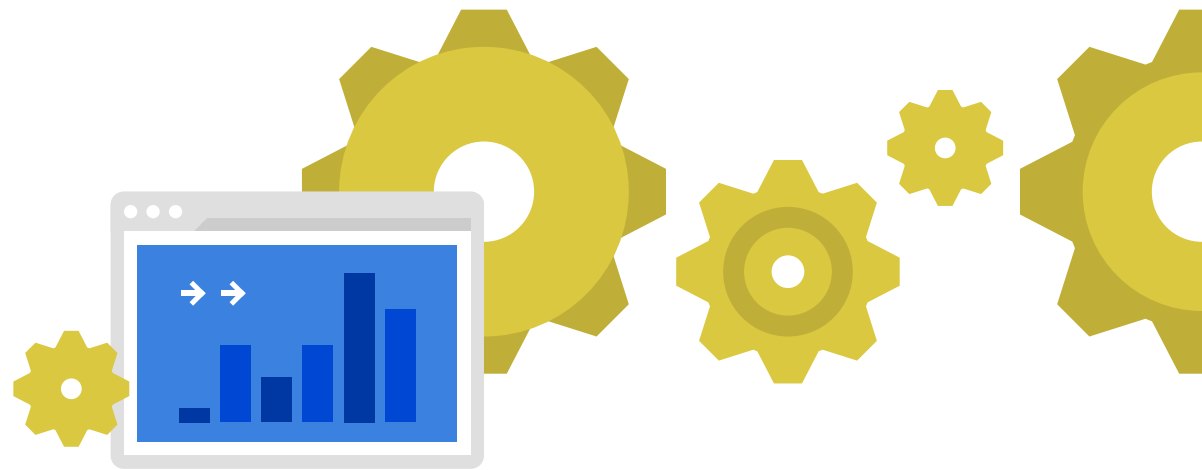
If you're wondering how SEO works and want to learn how to do SEO yourself, you've come to the right place.

So where do you start with SEO?

With limited time and budget, you need to know where to focus your efforts to have confidence you'll get SEO results with the most bang for your buck. It's easy to get distracted by articles that underscore the importance of **all 200 ranking factors**. This guide will review SEO basics, and provide you with a structured game plan for how to start SEO.

IN THIS GUIDE, WE'LL TAKE THE **PROBLEM > SOLUTION** APPROACH TO MAKING SEO WORK FOR YOU.

How to make SEO work for your website

DO YOU KNOW THE BIGGEST PROBLEMS THAT KEEP YOU FROM RANKING IN SERPS AND DRIVING ORGANIC TRAFFIC?

These are the four most common problems that get in the way of SEO results:

You don't optimize your content for SEO

You have technical problems with the way your site is set up

You don't have a strong domain authority

You are getting some results, but you aren't measuring in a way that can tell you what's really working, kind of working, or not working at all.

It's okay if you're unsure of how to address these common problems.

The solution to each problem is not as hard as you imagine. We'll walk you through them next.

However, keep in mind, you don't need to focus on all of them at once. Prioritizing is the key to SEO success. Start with your biggest problem area first.

PROBLEM

Your content isn't optimized for SEO

SOLUTION

Follow on-page SEO best practices

Who does this affect?

Marketers who haven't yet started SEO. This usually means they haven't intentionally optimized each piece of content for an optimal keyword phrase.

Why is search engine optimized content important?

So many marketers set out on a race to crank out a bunch of content every day, week, month, etc. Focusing on quantity and frequency usually means that choosing keywords for SEO and following simple SEO best practices get left by the wayside.

If you feel like you've been spinning your wheels and getting nowhere, with no organic traffic to be seen for miles, chances are that you've fallen victim to this strategy.

How can you fix it?

The good news is you can fix this in 2 simple steps:

1 FIND THE BEST KEYWORD OPPORTUNITIES FOR EACH PIECE OF CONTENT

2 INCLUDE THOSE KEYWORDS IN YOUR CONTENT IN ALL THE APPROPRIATE PLACES

Step 1 KEYWORD RESEARCH

Your existing content still has hope for ranking. With a little keyword research and some minor tweaks to the content, you can start pulling in a bit of organic traffic. This is a great low hanging fruit opportunity to start seeing results.

You can keep the process lightweight by looking for keyword opportunities that are already very similar to the content on that page. This way, the tweaks you need to make to optimize for that term are minimal.

For new content that you create, doing research to **find keywords for which your site has a good chance of ranking** is worth the extra time it takes because it means better quality content and more organic traffic.

The key to finding great keyword opportunities is understanding your site's strength. Some sites can compete for more competitive keywords than others. Knowing the benchmark for how much competition you can take on and still get results is really important to SEO success.

Aiming too high will most likely get you nowhere.

Aiming at the right competition level will likely get you a healthy share of voice for that keyword. And the more content you create, thus capturing your fair share of voice, will add incremental traffic to the whole that will snowball over time.

Plus, as you build your site's competitive power by attracting inbound links, you'll be able to target higher competition keywords that are often higher in popularity too, opening you up to much more organic traffic.

Step ② ON-PAGE OPTIMIZATION

Now that you know what keyword phrase to target, it's time to start the SEO content writing phase of the program.

When doing content writing for SEO, make sure you include that keyword in all the prime places that help Google know what your content is about:

URL	TITLE TAG
H1 TAGS	IMAGE ALT TAGS
IMAGE URLS	BODY COPY

Include your target phrase a couple of times in your body copy, but resist the urge to repeat it too many times.

You can also include similar and related phrases in your copy. There are two great places to find phrases that relate to your target keyword.

1   AT THE BOTTOM OF THE SERP FOR YOUR KEYWORD YOU'LL FIND A LIST OF "SEARCHES RELATED TO __YOUR KEYWORD__."

2   IN **GOOGLE** ENTER YOUR KEYWORD LIST OF SIMILAR PHRASES IN ORDER OF THEIR RELEVANCE TO THE PHRASE YOU ENTERED.

Include a handful of those related phrases throughout your content to reinforce the topic.

Last but not least, link to your content from other pages on your site using the target keyword in your anchor text.
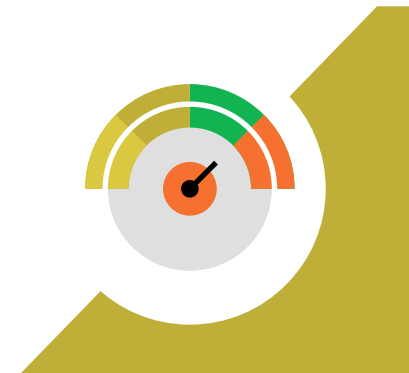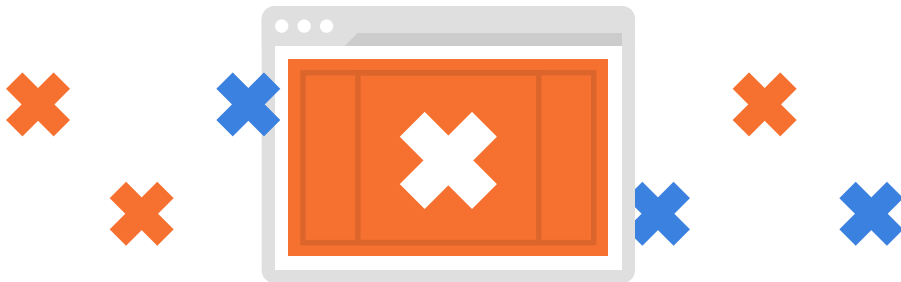
PROBLEM

You have technical problems with your site

SOLUTION

Run a site audit to discover problem areas

Who does this affect?

Unsuspecting marketers. It can happen to anyone. And it's hard to know without doing a thorough **SEO site audit** to ensure that your site is set up in a way that complies with search engine crawling requirements.

Why do you have technical problems with your site?

With so many moving parts to SEO, it's possible for some things to fall through the cracks. And if you're not a developer, you can't easily look under the hood to troubleshoot what's going on.

How can you fix it?

Fixing technical problems on your site is also a fairly simple 2-step fix:
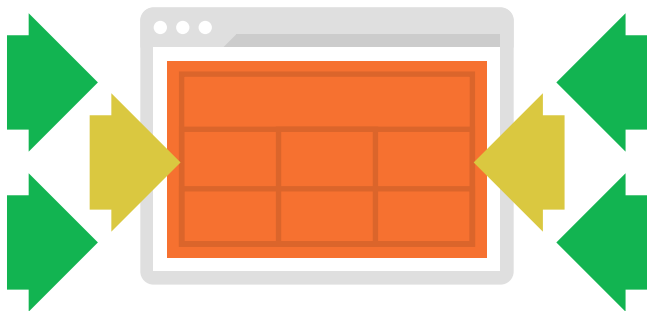
1 RUN A SITE AUDIT

2 ASK YOUR DEVELOPER TO ADDRESS ANY RED FLAGS IT UNVEILS

PROBLEM

You have low domain authority

SOLUTION

Create SEO content and build links to it

Who does this affect?

In simplest terms, this affects sites that don't have many inbound links.

Why is low domain authority a problem?

Google wants to deliver high-quality results for their users' search queries. That's what keeps their users coming back the next time they have a search to perform.

Inbound links to your page are like a vote of confidence by another site owner or content creator that your content is a quality resource that relates to and adds value in some way to their content. Think of it as Google's way of including an element of human quality control. Few inbound links translate to a lack of confidence in your site.

How can you fix it?

To get inbound links, you'll need content that other content creators (such as bloggers and journalists) find useful enough to link to.

Let's be clear. It's not as simple as emailing an influencer and asking for a link. That won't get you far. If anything, it'll burn bridges before they're built.

But if your content truly aligns with their audience's interests, they'll have good reason to link to it.

Bloggers and journalists have a constant finger on the pulse of their audience. Don't assume that you have that same intuitive sense. Validate content demand before you create it by doing a little bit of research. This will help you ensure your content will appeal to the influencers.

Keyword research can quickly tell you what topics are the most in-demand. And popular demand is what you want to aim for when coming up with link-worthy content ideas. Focusing your content topics on keywords with the highest search demand will allow you to cast the widest net possible to ensure you attract the most backlinks.
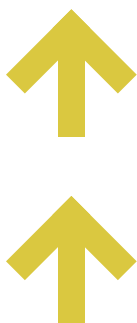
Once you've created and optimized content for the popular keyword, look at the sites that are driving traffic for that keyword. These are prime targets for outreach, assuming they aren't competitors. Their sites are clearly relevant to the topic that you wrote about if they are showing up for that term, so they might have an interest in your content.

Other sites that link to those mentioned above that are driving traffic for that SEO keyword are also prime targets for outreach. They've proven to have an interest in linking to content on that topic. Perhaps your content will be compelling to them too.
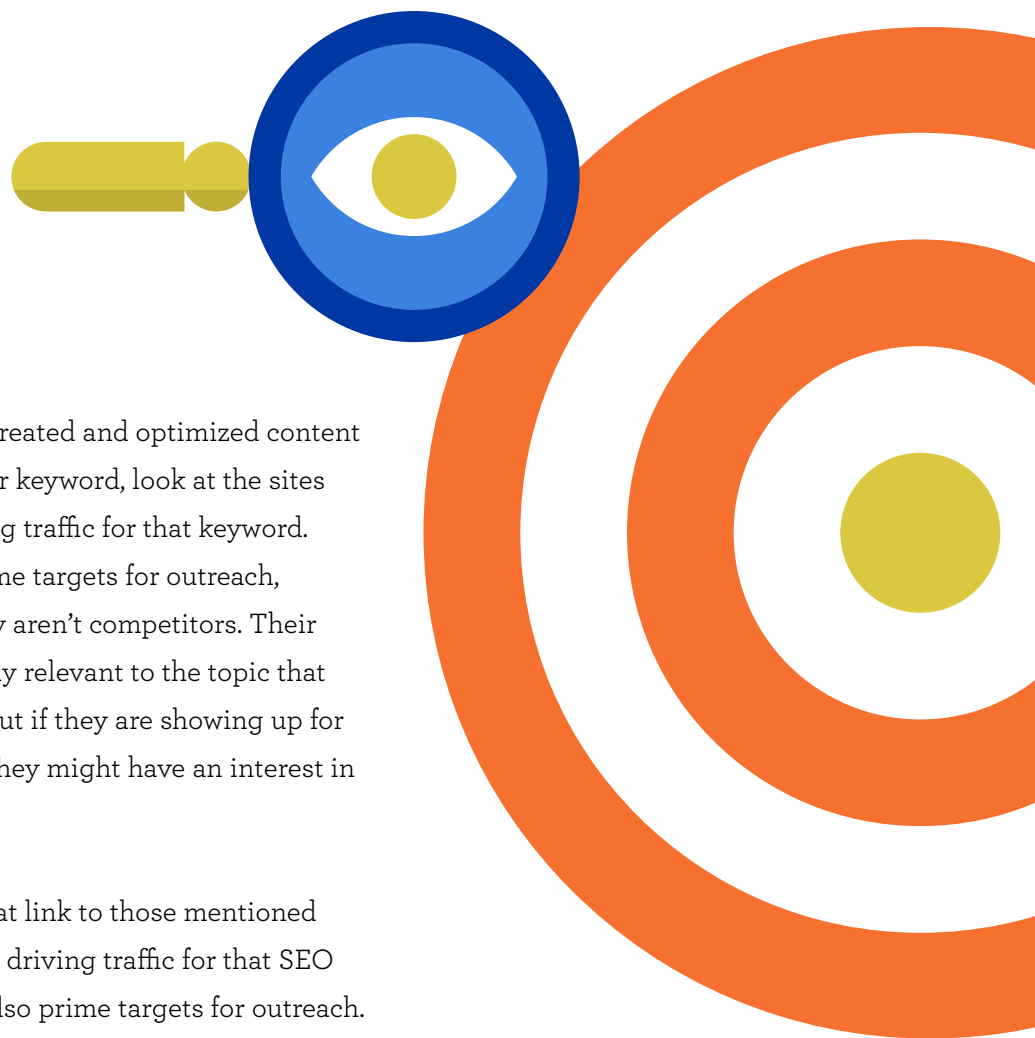
PROBLEM

You aren't measuring your results *the right way*

SOLUTION

Create a dashboard of key KPIs for organic search

Who does this affect?

Anyone who simply looks in Google Analytics at total organic traffic, doesn't see a big bump in traffic, and then calls it a day.

Why aren't you measuring the right way?

Getting results from SEO is a matter of making incremental additions in traffic from each piece of content. The search traffic that a single piece of SEO content attracts is often fairly consistent and sustainable. That means it usually continues to drive traffic month after month, well beyond its initial publish date.

As you add more content, each piece will attract additional traffic, adding to an increase in your overall volume. So the impact is something that builds over time, as you create more content. It's highly unlikely that you'll see a large spike in organic traffic from a couple pieces of content, especially if your site's competitive power limits the keywords you can rank for to ones that are low competition, which are typically also low popularity.

How can you fix it?

What you really need to know first when you look at results is:

DID THE PIECE OF CONTENT I PUBLISHED SUCCESSFULLY DRIVE ORGANIC TRAFFIC FROM THE KEYWORD I CHOSE TO OPTIMIZE IT FOR?

# Track the effectiveness of each piece of content

You set out to drive traffic to a piece of content for a specific keyword, so measure the results of just that.

Below are the key KPIs to measure whether or not you're successfully driving traffic to your content from your target keyword:

▶ **Position of that page in SERPs**
   for the target keyword

▶ **Organic traffic to that page**
   for the target keyword

▶ **Total organic traffic to that page**
   for any keyword

▶ **Total conversions**
   by organic traffic to page

▶ **Conversion rate**
   of organic traffic to page

If the page isn't doing well, you might consider these options:

✓ Make sure the page is fully optimized for the target keyword by following SEO best practices

✓ If it is fully optimized, consider optimizing the page for a different, lower competition keyword

✓ Lower the competition benchmark for the keywords you target on future content for SEO
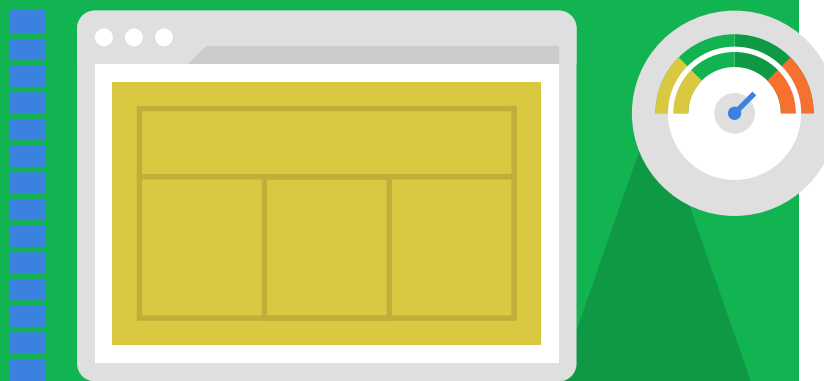
Track aggregate results of all SEO content

Once you've gotten a clear signal that your pointed efforts are indeed coming to fruition—or not—you can start to take a look at the cumulative effect of those efforts.

Here are some of your higher-level KPIs:

▶ **Total organic traffic to site**

▶ **Total organic traffic**
  by non-branded keywords

▶ **Total organic traffic**
  by branded keywords

▶ **Total conversions from organic traffic**

▶ **Total conversions from organic traffic**
  by non-branded keywords

▶ **Total conversions from organic traffic**
  by branded keywords

To sum it up, if your site has a fairly low competitive power (as most just starting out with SEO do), the keywords that you can successfully target will be lower on the popularity scale. That means that each piece of content will add a bit of traffic to the whole. You won't see a large spike in overall organic traffic. But if you keep the flywheel turning by creating content on a regular basis, those results will add up and multiply over time as your site's competitive strength increases.

So watching the page level and keyword level results you are generating is an important way to know if you are on the right track.
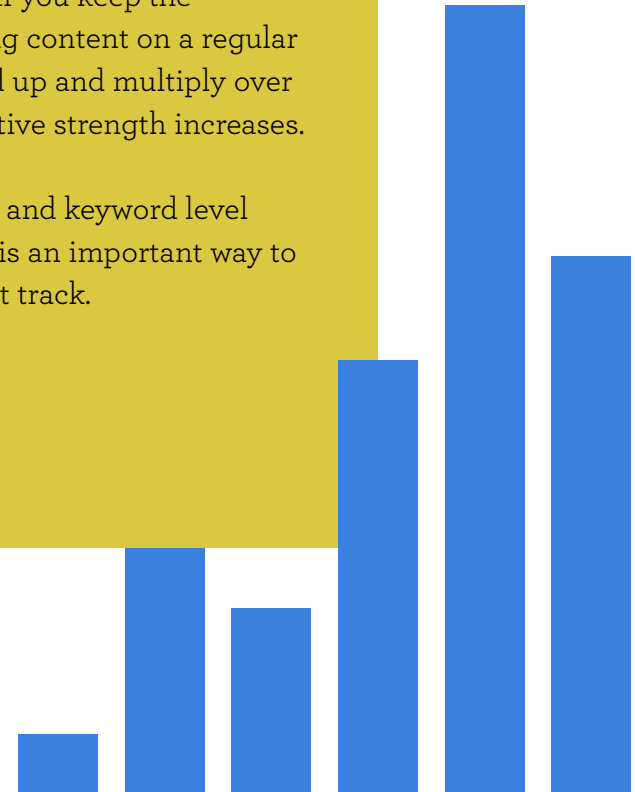
Summary

Understanding SEO can be overwhelming.
But it doesn't have to be.

Knowing that you don't have to do everything all at once should ease the feeling that you'll never catch up.

Prioritize your efforts based on your biggest obstacles. Measure the results of those efforts. Make adjustments and tweak your SEO strategy according to what's working and what's not. Rinse and repeat.