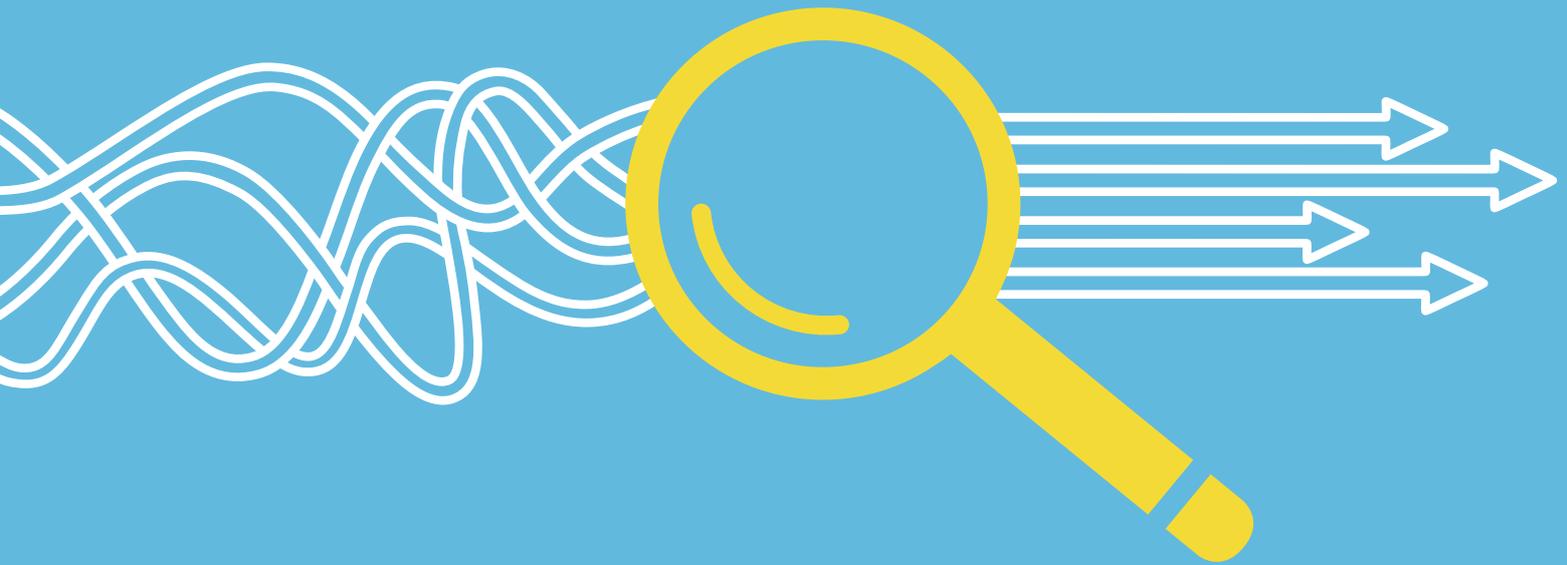




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**USING GOOGLE SEARCH
CONSOLE TO INFORM YOUR
SEARCH STRATEGY**



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INTRODUCTION

When it comes to making the most of your online presence and appearing for the correct key terms and to the correct audience, there are numerous tools that you can use to inform your strategy. One of the most popular is the Google Search Console (GSC) and over the coming pages we'll inform you how to get the most out of the platform and use it to boost your performance. Let's begin...

WHAT IS GOOGLE SEARCH CONSOLE?

Search Console is a free service offered by Google that helps businesses monitor and maintain their site's presence in search results. Launched officially in May 2015 to replace Google Webmaster Tools, the platform was again updated in January 2018 and is one of the primary ways in which developers and SEOs monitor performance.

As well as being free to use, Search Console does not require registration and sites will be included in Google's search results regardless. However investing time in the platform can help a business to understand how Google views their site and optimise its performance in search results.

WHO SHOULD BE USING GSC?

When Google renamed Webmaster Tools to the GSC, they did so with the aim of being more inclusive. It was thought that the vast majority of those using the service to improve or monitor performance weren't in fact 'webmasters' and therefore, it was seen perhaps as a little too technical and needed to be more accessible.

Under the new format, Google said that the platform was for "Anyone with a website! From generalist to specialist, from newbie to advanced, Search Console can help."

They then broke down their target audience into five subsections for the types of people that should be using GSC and what each group could expect from using it. Their five groups are identified as:

- **A business owner who delegates** - Even if you don't think you know how to use Search Console, you should be aware of it and become familiar with the basics. You might hire your webmaster or a marketing specialist to help you set up your website with Search Console. In that case, you can work with that person to ensure you have access and control to all of the reports for your website. In addition, it's a good idea to learn all you can about how your site is performing in search results so you can make important business decisions about your site.
- **SEO specialist or marketer** - As someone focused on online marketing, Search Console will help to analyze your performance on Google Search, optimise your ranking, and make informed decisions about the appearance of your site's search results. You can use the information in Search Console to influence technical decisions for the website and do sophisticated marketing analysis in conjunction with other Google tools like Analytics, Google Trends, and AdWords.
- **Site Administrator** - As a site admin, you care about the healthy operation of your site. Search Console lets you easily monitor and in some cases resolve server errors, site load issues, and security issues like hacking and malware. You can also use it to ensure any site maintenance or adjustments you make happen smoothly with respect to search performance.
- **Web Developer** - If you are creating the actual markup and/or code for your site, Search Console helps you monitor and resolve common issues with markup, such as errors in structured data.
- **App Developer** - If you own an app, you want to see how mobile users find your app using Google Search. Search Console can help you integrate your app seamlessly with the website world.

WHAT ARE THE BENEFITS OF USING GSC?

The main benefits of using the GSC are to monitor performance in the search engine results pages (SERPs) and to discover how Google and others see your site.

One of the most important benefits is that you are able to make sure that your site is fully optimised, and that Google can access all of your content. This is vital as it makes sure you are getting the most out of the keyword rich text and that your site is displaying to the correct audience. You are also able to check when new content has been crawled and remove the content that is dated, or you no longer wish to rank for. Google also states that you are able to:

- **Create and monitor content that delivers visually engaging search results**
- **Maintain your site with minimal disruption to search performance**
- **Monitor and resolve malware or spam issues so your site stays clean**

In terms of visibility, GSC can be used in a number of ways. It can help brands understand exactly which queries caused their site to be displayed in the SERPs and which queries display the site more frequently. This gives the business owner the perfect opportunity to see where they're strong and where to concentrate future strategies.

Search Console can also highlight if you are gaining the maximum exposure for your most basic details. You can use the platform to see if your product prices, company contact info, or events are highlighted in rich search results.

Two of the biggest things that Google look for when they are planning to crawl and rank a site for a certain query are links and optimisation. The search engine wants to see who is linking to your site and the authority that the site has relating to these links. If you are being linked to by highly relevant sites and your site is optimised to answer the query then you are far more likely to appear higher in SERPs.

In terms of optimisation one of the top priorities is the need for speed and for sites to be fully optimised for mobile. Since searches on mobile overtook desktop there has been a higher focus on using Accelerated Mobile Pages (AMP). This Google-backed project was designed as an open standard for any publisher to have pages load quickly on mobile devices.

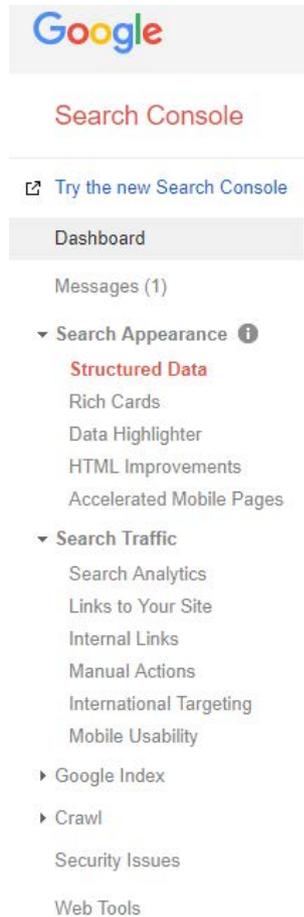
When launched, Google said: "By creating open technical standards to boost page speed and streamlining ads (e.g., no interstitials, no pop-ups), the hope is that the ecosystem can build a faster, more engaging mobile web that will benefit everyone."

Aside from AMP pages being quicker and the fact that page load and site speed are official ranking factors, part of the reason for using the GSC to see if you are fully optimised is that you want to offer a good user experience (UX).

If a page fails to load, or if there are errors of poorly optimised images then there is a good chance, that the person using the site will exit the page, or not return at all.

SEARCH APPEARANCE

One of the first main sections of GSC is the “Search Appearance” section. This section is important for user to understand how their website is currently setup and how it display on SERPs.



Within the search appearance section is information regarding structured markup, rich cards, HTML improvements (metadata information), and AMP setup.

According to TopRank the most important of the sub categories is the search analytics tab.

They said: “This is a very powerful SEO tool. You can analyse your site for keyword opportunities on a page or a section of your site. You can also drill down into how your mobile keywords are performing compared to your desktop keywords.

“You can use this tab to identify SEO strategies to help increase organic visibility by re-optimising content that has multiple keywords ranking on the bottom of page one or the top of page two.

“You can also use the tab to guide the creation of your content plans for different SEO campaigns.

“This tab mobile usability outlines if your website is mobile friendly or not. It is important to stay on top of any mobile usability issues so that your site renders correctly for all types of devices, especially with Google moving to the mobile-first index.”

WHAT TO DO WITH NEW CONTENT

Content is one of the single most important factors when it comes getting your website appearing on SERPs, after all it is the information that Google crawls to determine what your site is about, what information your pages contain and whether or not you are relevant to a given query.

Something that many brands forget is that this content should grow, expand and update as your business does the same. If you have new products or services that you want to promote or if you have news and updates that will be relevant for your audience it is vital that you upload it to the site. This information could be the difference between certain positions for certain key terms and could aid the effort to gain new visitors.

Using GSC is the fastest way to run an M.O.T on your site, you can give it a full health check and make sure that you are not experiencing a higher than normal level of errors. You are also able to look at weekly and monthly patterns in terms of traffic. If you are receiving peak traffic at 15.00 on a Friday for example, ask what the reason for this is. Have you sent an email, has a promotion gone live, are you pushing content which is keyword rich, or are you using social media to drive traffic through newsjacking or similar techniques?

The answer to these questions and the traffic information that you gather from your GSC dashboard, can dictate the development of future strategies.

When it comes to adding new content onto your site, one of the first things that you will want to do after you have uploaded via you CMS, is to test that Google can actually see the content. This can be done using the Fetch as Google tool.

Search Analytics

Analyze your performance on Google Search. Filter and compare your results to better understand your users' search patterns.

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Clicks	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Impressions	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> CTR	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Position	
<input checked="" type="radio"/> Queries No filter ▾	<input type="radio"/> Pages No filter ▾	<input type="radio"/> Countries No filter ▾	<input type="radio"/> Devices No filter ▾	<input type="radio"/> Search Type Web ▾
Total clicks 140	Total impressions 5,126	Avg. CTR 2.73%	Avg. position 26.4	

The next stage is to update your sitemap and tell Google which of your pages that you want to be crawled and which pages not to crawl using robots.txt or noindex tags.

Sitemaps

By me (1) All (1)

Sitemaps content

All content types

- Submitted
- Indexed

Web pages

914 Submitted

813 Indexed

1,000
750
500
250

Web

Sitemaps (All content types)

Download All Resubmit Delete

Sitemap

1 /sitemap.xml

robots.txt Tester

Edit your robots.txt and check for errors [Learn more](#)

Latest version seen on 4/23/18, 7:40 AM OK (200) 593 Bytes

```
1 User-agent: *
2 Disallow: /wp-admin/
3 Disallow: /wp-content/uploads/2015/03/Build-clean-Build-organic.pdf
4 Disallow: /wp-content/uploads/2014/02/a-simple-guide-to-seo.pdf
5 Disallow: /services/organic-search-seo/organic-search-green-ebook/
6 Disallow: /wp-content/uploads/2015/03/A-Simple-Guide-to-SEO.pdf
7 Disallow: /wp-content/uploads/2015/03/Retail-eBook.pdf
8 Disallow: /wp-content/uploads/2015/01/Local-SEO-Cheat-Sheet.pdf
9 Disallow: /wp-content/uploads/2015/03/Simple-Guide-to-PPC.pdf
10 Disallow: *.pdf
11
12 Disallow: /*?s=*
13
14 Allow: /wp-admin/admin-ajax.php
15
```

0 Errors 0 Warnings

The next task is to ensure that your pages are being indexed. Although Google is at the forefront of the industry there can still be a 'lag' and even after you have submitted new content and requested for it to be indexed there may be a delay.

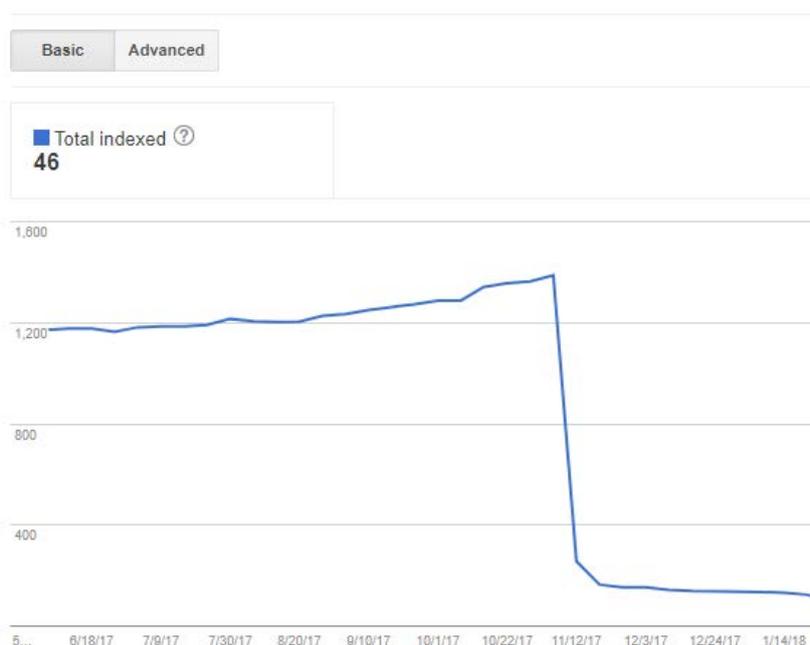
A few weeks after new content has been submitted you should check back on GSC and see if the pages and posts are starting to be picked up. If they are you will notice as rise in the number of pages that your site is being indexed for. The severity or steadiness of the rise will correlate with the amount of content that you have uploaded. The graph below shows a client who was stagnating and needed new content. The new pages were added to the site an in a matter of weeks, the rise was evident.

Index Status Showing data from the last year



The beauty of monitoring these types of exercises is that it works both ways. We also used the GSC to remove crawling from a huge number of pages for another client. This was done due to a change in the focus of the business and a more targeted strategy. The client in question was appearing for a large volume of searched based on nearly 1400 crawled pages. We looked at the site and then removed nearly 90% of their content that was able to be indexed. The graph below highlights the drop in indexed pages. This may - to some businesses - be seen as a huge risk but has in fact led to a better quality of visitor to the site despite a drop in overall traffic, meaning that return visits and conversions are up and that there is a better UX.

Index Status Showing data from the last year



WEB TOOLS

Within the Web Tools section of GSC one of the first things that you come to is the Ad Experience Report. This is designed to identify ad experiences that violate the Better Ads Standards, a set of ad experiences the industry has identified as being highly annoying to users.

Ad Experience Report: Mobile

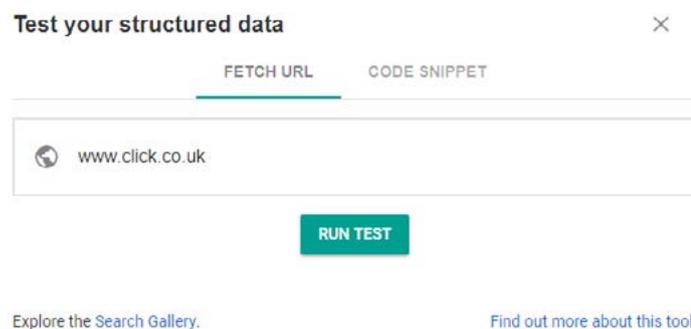
Select a property below to view its ad experience status and view examples of issues that need fixing.

If you are not verified for the relevant property, add it using the button below.

If someone in your organization (for example, your webmaster) is already verified for site ownership on Search Console, ask them to add you as an [owner](#) or [user](#). This will give you access to the Report.

Using the dropdown menu (as seen above) you can select the URL with which the ads are pointing towards and check to see if they breach the Google guidelines and if they are in contravention of the Better Ads Standards. If violations have been identified, you can request a review of your site after you've fixed the issues. The menu for the desktop is different only in name.

Another particularly interesting tool in GSC is the Structured Data Testing Tool which allows users to check that Google can correctly parse their structured data markup and display it in search results.



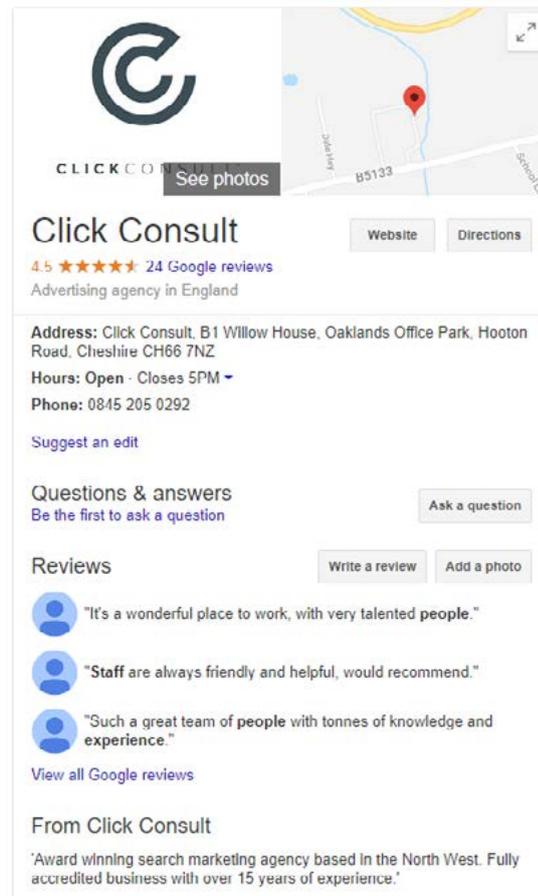
Entering the URL you wish to test in the above box delivers a HTML code for the user to validate. In here you can check to see if the content is present and available to crawl, that the alt text is in place and that the links are present.

In a similar vein you can also use the Email Markup Tester to validate the structured data contents of an HTML email.

The final, and perhaps best part of using the GSC to aid your search strategy is that it teaches best practice in the form of a checklist. The GSC offers numerous additional tools and by utilising these you are putting your site in the best possible position.

The other tools and resources that you can access through the GSC and which can assist your online performance are:

Google My Business – This service allows you to make sure your business looks great on Google Search, Maps and Google+ and what's more it's free. This is the perfect place for you to include all of the important information your customers might look for such as email address, contact details, reviews, opening times and a map.



Google Merchant Center – This is especially useful if you are a retail site or you have an ecommerce based model as it offers you a place to upload your product data to Google and make it available to Google Product Search.

PageSpeed Insights – You can use PageSpeed Insights to find out how to make your web pages fast on all devices. This optimisation can be the difference between a high position on the SERPs and digital obscurity.

http://www.click.co.uk/

Mobile Desktop

Speed
Average
1.1s FCP 1.5s DCL

Optimization
Good
84 / 100

Data from the Chrome User Experience report indicates this page's median **FCP** (1.1s) and **DCL** (1.5s) ranks it in the middle third of all pages. This page has a good level of optimization because few of its resources are render-blocking. [Learn more.](#)

After the initial results come back you can look at what changes can be made and the recommendations and optimisations that you can perform. Checking these things off will almost certainly lead to an improvement in performance and visibility. Here are some of the recommendations for a test site belonging to one of our clients:

Page Load Distributions



The distribution of this page's FCP and DCL events, categorized as Fast (fastest third), Average (middle third), and Slow (bottom third).

Page Stats

PSI estimates this page requires 5 render-blocking round trips and ~153 resources (3.6MB) to load. The median page requires 4 render-blocking round trips and ~89 resources (1.3MB) to load. Fewer round trips and bytes results in faster pages.

Optimization Suggestions

Eliminate render-blocking JavaScript and CSS in above-the-fold content

► [Show how to fix](#)

Leverage browser caching

► [Show how to fix](#)

Minify CSS

► [Show how to fix](#)

Minify HTML

► [Show how to fix](#)

Google Analytics – The ultimate tool for the office ‘stato’ Google Analytics is essential if you are to measure behaviour across websites, apps, and devices. If you can get a grasp on GA then you are sure to make better, data-driven decisions.

The GSC is one of those platforms that any marketer, businessperson or developer worth his salt will be using. The insights are powerful and by creating a strategy based on them you are sure to see positive, prolonged progress.

GET IN TOUCH WITH US TODAY

ABOUT US

Located in North West England, Click Consult is a multi award-winning search marketing agency with a focus on organic (SEO) and paid search (PPC), with over 70 professionals employed and with a portfolio of over 60 clients from across the UK, Europe, Americas and Australia.

Click was named Search Agency of the Year 2018, adding to its long list of other awards and accolades, and also ranks within both RAR's and Econsultancy's 'Top 100 Digital Agencies', and Prolific North's 'Top 50 Digital Agencies'.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Blog

Click Consult regularly posts actionable insights on its blog – dealing with all aspects of search marketing. From technical SEO to PPC, content marketing and Analytics advice, the Click Consult blog has something for everyone of any ability.

eBooks

Click Consult produces in depth eBooks on aspects of search marketing on a regular basis, dealing with the latest best practices, changes to standard practices, methods of improvement and more.

Infographics

Sometimes what you need is a quick point of reference about complex subjects. Thanks to its team of highly talented designers, Click Consult is also able to distil its vast experience into easy to understand visual content.

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