



8 ACTIONABLE SEO STRATEGIES TO IMPLEMENT TODAY



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INTRODUCTION

Whatever the challenges that a business faces, some things never change. The need to have a strong online presence and to be able to reach the right audience at the right time is vital if you are to achieve success. We know that by implementing different tactics in your SEO strategy you can get ahead and stay ahead of the competition and that businesses in competitive markets can claim the top spot in search engine results pages (SERPs) for themselves.

With all of this in mind our team of experts has looked at all of the things that you can do to make sure your site grows organically and picked out the following 10 things to implement today.

Let's begin...



1

SET UP GOOGLE MY BUSINESS (GMB)

If you have a store (bricks and mortar) set-up a Google My Business account to encourage local visibility and increased footfall.

Registering and regularly updating your Google My Business (GMB) page gives your brand free SERPs exposure and an opportunity to push various content through the expanding options in 'posts'. Here's how to get started...

By signing up to Google My Business you can tell Google directly the name of your business, the exact location, what it does, opening times, what it looks like (you can upload your own images), and many more attributes. GMB influences your Google Maps results. For instance, Google smartly tells the searcher whether the business is open or closed right now and pulls out images to give users more of an idea of what to expect.

GMB also offers a huge amount of data in Google Analytics, so you have the stats to back up the strategy.

Not only does GMB make it easier for it to know what's what about your business, it also improves the search experience for your customer – giving more 'at a glance' information than the traditional SERPs listings do.

There are a variety of questions Google wants you to fill out to complete your GMB profile. You must begin by verifying you are the business owner: for most businesses, verification means requesting, receiving, and reading a verification postcard from Google.

Make sure your business' details are complete and accurate – and ensure you frequently check your listing to ensure it stays this way.

This includes:

- Your physical address
- Phone number
- Business category
- Opening hours

2

THINK FAST

It goes without saying that of the hundreds of ranking factors that Google looks for when it comes to the positioning of websites in the SERPs, some have more prominence than others. One area that can make an impact and that does make an instant difference is page speed, specifically mobile page speed. This metric is one of the single biggest decision makers that users have if they are to stick around, continue reading or come back to your website because it has one of the greatest bearings on user experience (UX).

According to Google, it is expected that any page will load, in full in under three seconds. This is its benchmark for what correlated with a positive UX and it is these pages that are performing best on SERPs. In a post on their Adwords blog, Google said: “Consumers’ expectations for faster and better digital experiences are on the rise. The mobile web is no exception. But the thrill of the hunt, whether it’s researching the best hotel deals for spring break or buying a new pair of sneakers, is often hindered by slow mobile sites.



“We’ve all been there: eagerly anticipating a mobile site to load and then abandoning it out of frustration. It’s a challenge most businesses struggle with. In fact, 53% of visits are abandoned if a mobile site takes more than three seconds to load, according to our data.”

A slow mobile site doesn’t just frustrate your customers, it can limit your business. In retail, Google sees that for every one second delay in page load time, conversions can fall by up to 20%. When it comes to these changes Google developers recommend a few quick, yet essential wins:

Avoid landing page redirects

Redirects trigger an additional HTTP request-response cycle and delay page rendering. In the best case, each redirect will add a single roundtrip (HTTP request-response), and in the worst it may result in multiple additional roundtrips to perform the DNS lookup, TCP handshake, and TLS negotiation in addition to the additional HTTP request-response cycle. As a result, you should minimize use of redirects to improve site performance. Here are some examples of redirect patterns:

- *example.com uses responsive web design, no redirects are needed* – fast and optimal!
- *example.com → m.example.com/home* – multi-roundtrip penalty for mobile users.
- *example.com → www.example.com → m.example.com* – very slow mobile experience.

Improve server response time

Server response time measures how long it takes to load the necessary HTML to begin rendering the page from your server, subtracting out the network latency between Google and your server. There may be variance from one run to the next, but the differences should not be too large. In fact, highly variable server response time may indicate an underlying performance issue.

Optimise images

Images often account for most of the downloaded bytes on a page. As a result, optimising images can often yield some of the largest byte savings and performance improvements: the fewer bytes the browser has to download, the less competition there is for the client's bandwidth and the faster the browser can download and render content on the screen.

Reduce the size of the above-the-fold content

If the amount of data required exceeds the initial congestion window (typically 14.6kB compressed), it will require additional round trips between your server and the user's browser. For users on networks with high latencies such as mobile networks this can cause significant delays to page loading.

To make pages load faster, limit the size of the data (HTML markup, images, CSS, JavaScript) that is needed to render the above-the-fold content of your page. There are several ways to do this:

- Structure your HTML to load the critical, above-the-fold content first
- Reduce the amount of data used by your resources

This was measured through an automated process which was then reviewed and managed by web speed performance specialists.

The criteria for these pages were as follows:

- **'Findability'** – Following a search, are users taken to the most appropriate page? Does the on-site search help them quickly find the right product or service?
- **Product pages** – Are the main product or service images and details presented clearly and consistently? Are there prominent next steps or calls to action?
- **Registration and conversion** – Are forms easy to complete? Are price breakdowns provided? Is the transaction process simple and safe for users?
- **Mobile design** – Are the site's pages mobile-friendly? Are they well laid out, with clear headings, well-labelled icons, and relevant content? Is branding consistent?

To make sure your website loads quickly and check your site's performance you can use tools such as <https://developers.google.com/speed/pagespeed/insights/>. Another thing to remember here is that images are commonly the culprit for a slow loading website. You should try and reduce image sizes for your website with tools such as <https://tinypng.com/>.

By using Google's Lighthouse v2 browser automation tool to conduct synthetic (or simulated) testing of website speed on WiFi. The following metrics can be measured:

- First meaningful paint (5)
- First CPU Idle (5)
- Time to Interactive (5)
- Speed Index (1)
- Estimated Input Latency (1)

The numbers in brackets relate to the weighting that Google gives each task in relation to speed. Whilst this isn't gospel, I feel that it gives businesses an indication of which parts of speed performance to target first when making changes.



3

MOVE TO MOBILE

Mobile-First search is Google's nod to the fact that people using their service are far more transient and that the way in which the search is often done on a smartphones or tablets. With this in mind it has put a greater focus on ranking sites which are optimised for such devices.

Google now uses the mobile experience of a site to calculate its rankings, rather than the desktop version. As this Mobile-First indexing directly affects where your business appears in search results, the responsiveness of your website has never been more crucial.

Your site's mobile responsiveness has long impacted on your SEO performance in other ways:

- **Functionality** – websites that are difficult to operate on mobile devices have a higher bounce rate, driving frustrated users to competitor sites: another factor Google takes into account when determining rankings.
- **Page load speeds** – slow load times widely affect mobile users relying on 3G signals; the '3 seconds-or-less' rule means users will abandon sites that don't load quickly enough, which can again drive up your bounce rate.

The way people use the internet on mobile devices is different to desktop – and so is their purchasing behaviour. Mobile users expect that they can access information quickly and simply.

The stand-out issues with the mobile buyer's journey is how regularly it is interrupted and how short the sessions can be – people often browse while waiting to do other things, or between tasks. This means you need to give your customers a leaner experience that's as fast and simple as possible if you want to increase conversions.

Put simply you need to make sure your website is mobile-friendly!

Businesses should ensure that content is the responsive to the needs of the user meaning that mobile shouldn't have less content than desktop – but that desktop should be an expanded experience for the user. You can check if your site loads correctly on mobile with Google's Mobile-Friendly Test <https://search.google.com/test/mobile-friendly>.

4

THINK ABOUT UFC

Knowing your audience is one of the first things that businesses have to do if they are to become successful online. You need to know how to act and how to represent the needs of your users, and potential new users.

In terms of SEO, it is essential that you dedicate a portion of your time testing your offering and making sure that you are being found in the right places and for the right keywords. If you aren't then performance will dip or could be none existent.

Users today want to get the answers to their queries quickly and easily. They also want to make sure that the results that are returned are relevant and that they are from a trusted or apparently trusted source, (this latter point is important as it goes without saying that customers want a trusted service, the problem is that if you are new to the space then you have to appear as professional, relevant and authentic as possible).

Customers and users tend to be looking for one of the following things:

- an accurate answer
- an item
- a specific set of details
- a date
- an image
- an address
- a service
- a definition

In an official definition, there are three broad categories that cover most web search queries: informational, navigational, and transactional. These are also called “do, know, go.” The three areas are:

- **Informational queries** – Queries that cover a broad topic (eg Liverpool or New Cars) for which there may be thousands of relevant results.
- **Navigational queries** – Queries that seek a single website or web page of a single entity (eg YouTube or Facebook).
- **Transactional queries** – Queries that reflect the intent of the user to perform a particular action, like purchasing a car or downloading a screen saver.

Write content for the users first and search engines second. Content is still king! Provide useful and unique content for your customers.

5

THINK ABOUT KEYWORDS

When a brand looks to improve the returns from their online presence, often they will look at link profiles, social reach, influencer marketing and a host of other elements and techniques. This is understandable, the majority of marketing blogs and resources dedicate themselves to such things – but as a result, thorough keyword research can be overlooked.

However, keyword research can improve traffic, return on marketing investment (ROMI), visibility and more – often at a lower cost than some of the more talked about parts of search marketing. While it can be labour intensive, keyword research is a vital part of any SEO strategy, and should form the backbone of your initial efforts along with technical SEO – with link building and other techniques to improve rankings following on from a well-constructed keyword strategy, as you will want to build links with anchor text that reflects keyword targets as well as more general site URL links and product service links etc. Google understands keywords and phrases related to a topic so always keep quality in mind when producing content also.

6

TRACKING

When it comes to having an accurate tracking system in place, many businesses can be put off by the perceived time and cost involved. But what about the time and money you could already be wasting through guesswork rather than data-backed decision-making?

That is why it is vital that you make sure tracking is installed correctly such as Google Analytics, Google Tag Manager and Google Search Console to measure your SEO efforts.

Ask yourself, are you currently monitoring and tracking visitors' activity on your website? If not, you could be missing out on realising your site's full potential and overlooking opportunities to save money. For example, how much do you currently spend on display advertising or SEO without knowing how many and what type of phone calls the traffic generates?

The first step when it comes to tracking should be to establish what it is you want to track. If you run an eCommerce business, not only can you track the number of purchases, but also the correct amount of revenue for each of those. If you're more of a lead gen company, you may want to track form completions, phone calls and identify which channels those conversions have come through, newsletter sign-ups, message though contact us page so you can establish where these actions are coming from.

7

UPDATE META DESCRIPTIONS

Essentially, metadata is data that describes other data, the prefix ‘meta’ being defined as an underlying description of something. From the size and contents of an item to its origin and style, the underlying definitions provided by metadata allow individuals to more easily retrieve, organise or utilise any given information.

Today, with an almost infinite amount of information being instantly accessible online, the use of metadata is more important than ever as its use on websites ensures that pages can be located, navigated and managed as effectively as possible. In truth the use of metadata hasn’t changed since the days when individuals would write on the back of photographs, declaring the date, location and the names of those in the picture, then place those photographs into specific albums to make them easier to find. The only differences are the scale on which such data is being used, the amount of metadata being stored and the number of issues that would arise should files, web pages and other such information not be effectively defined and categorised.

Unlike the meta title, a page’s meta description has no direct organic search (SEO) influence. However, it can be a make-or-break deciding factor in a user’s decision about whether your content is relevant to their search query and worth checking out, leading to a higher click through rate (CTR) and potentially higher quality traffic.

However well-crafted your description meta tag, there’s never been any guarantee that Google will use it. The best chance has always been when the description contains the user’s search term, and provides a good summary of the page. Google could show a different meta description depending on the user’s search terms, to make it more relevant, pulled from the destination page.

Businesses should write meta descriptions to increase click-through rate from search engine results pages. This is the first piece of content your users see - try to include benefit-driven copy and a call to action!



8

AMPLIFY YOUR CONTENT ACROSS THE RIGHT SOCIAL MEDIA PLATFORMS

When it comes to online marketing there are many things that businesses can do to enhance the performance of their company in a digital world. We all know that social media is one of the most influential ways to speak to your audience and generate traffic but which platform is right for you?

Regardless of the size of your team you should be able to build a plan that will communicate directly with those you are targeting and include your existing customers in terms of the latest developments products or services that you offer. With so many different platforms to choose from it can be a real maze and one of the other considerations you have to make is the actual size of your team that will be in charge of the social media and how they are going to target customers on a regular basis. It really is all about audience where social media is concerned and if you are finding a channel with which your customers can resonate then success will surely come.

A study by the Digital Marketing Institute found that by spending just 6 hours per week on social media, two thirds of them found improved lead generation. This is a figure that highlights not only the importance of using social media but the difference it can make to your business.

One mistake that many businesses make is that they don't realise the difference between the individual platforms. They don't understand the reach these platforms have or indeed the dedication it takes to implement the perfect plan.



FINAL THOUGHTS

We all know that there isn't an exact science when it comes to search and digital marketing and that there is an element of trial and error when coming up with the best strategy. Through our years of learning and implementing different strategies for different clients in various sectors, we are very confident that taking these eight tips and putting them into your workflow results will soon follow. Why not check out our other [services](#) and see what we could do for your business...

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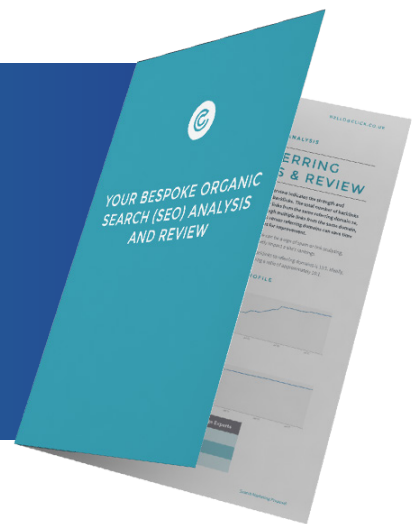
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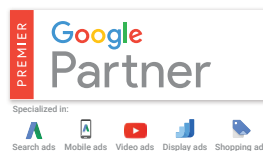
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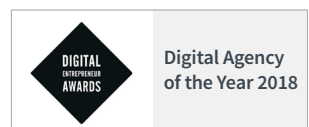
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