ON-PAGE CONTENT AND UX GUIDE

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INTRODUCTION

Of all of the things that we look at when it comes to SEO one of the most important, and proven strategies is to optimise your on-page content to offer the best possible user experience (UX). Search is all about appearing for the most relevant results at the right time. You want your site visitors to not only get the information they are looking for, but that when they get to your site they stay there and ultimately convert, regardless of your goals.

In the past we have covered both of these topics in great detail and we thought it wise, and timely, that we combine the two and look at the considerations you need to make in order to get the most from your site.

Let's begin…

WHAT IS ON-PAGE CONTENT?

An important aspect of local SEO is ensuring that the copy across your website is high quality and extensive. In the case of local SEO, this must be the case on all local pages on your website.

Location-specific landing pages should ideally be 300 words in length and include information about the local area. If you have multiple local pages on your website, you have to ensure that each page has unique content.

The content that you write and release should also be of the highest quality. 'Quality', by its nature, is generally qualitative – there's something ephemeral and subjective about the definition. However, in a field which – rightly or wrongly – prides itself in being predominantly data-driven, such a non-specific term is virtually useless to us.

For that reason, what we need to do is to break down this 'quality' that is much discussed into quantitative terms. Measuring the immeasurable is not as much of a losing battle as it may first seem, however, as the 'quality' we are looking to define here is a series of machine translatable aspects of a larger whole.

Because we are looking at quality as it could be understood by an algorithm, we can bypass the quality of the writing – beyond structural, grammatical and accuracy measurements (spelling, punctuation etc.) and we can look at elements of a piece of content or a web page which an algorithm could easily understand.

Can the content be reached?
Firstly and importantly, the ability for the data to be discovered by search engines has to be the first point in any checklist. This means that you should ensure your content is not blocked by robots.txt or any in any other way out of the reach of search engines.

Is the content quick for users to access?
With the shift to mobile devices, search also developed the need for low demand, high speed pages. In order for your content to be considered 'quality', it will need to load quickly – so you will need to avoid render blocking scripts, loading too many animations, images or excessive numbers of fonts to ensure that the content is fast loading.

Is the content well written?
This is not a measure of literary value, it simply refers to the use of correct spelling, punctuation and grammar. As far back as 2011, Matt Cutts was advising that such things were already a ranking factor (though presumably of low weighting), so ensure you're running your copy through a spell checker.

Is your data using the right structured data types?
Schema helps to add machine readable context to your content, so ensure that you're employing the various schema types that are available to your content and your industry.

Are you attracting the right links?
There has been an over reliance on DA as an indicator of quality as far as links are concerned – but in reality, we should be looking at industry relevant domains to build our authority in order to serve as a frame of reference for our content.

WHAT IS UX?

UX writing is the art of crafting the texts that appear throughout the interface of digital products (websites, mobile apps, etc.). Just as in the world of traditional publishing, this text is referred to as copy. But UX writing differs from copywriting in that it aims to guide the user through the interface in an intuitive manner.

As the apps and websites that we use become increasingly complex, the need for clear guidance within them also grows. But more than that, as these digital products become more a part of our daily lives, we as users seek out those that give us the most natural and fluid experience. These changes in the way we interact with technology have led to the creation of UX writing as a discipline in its own right.

UX & SEO – THE CUSTOMER JOURNEY

There are six distinctive stages to the consumer journey when it comes to the link between SEO performance and UX and by following this route you will gain better traction, build brand image and ultimately realise your KPIs.

The first step is the user intent phase. This is where the potential customer asks a question of a search engine that they hope will take them to the appropriate results and which will ultimately begin them on the path to fulfilling a need.

Next is the ranking stage, this is where the SEOs optimise the content on a site to make sure that it is picked up and that it hits the top of the SERPs – the higher the rank the more positive the correlation between the number of sessions and level of traffic.

Up next is the qualifying stage where the SEOs use keywords and other tactics to qualify the traffic that has been received. They learn from this and alter strategies and approaches if there is such a need. Constant testing in the form of CRO with any SEO work is a must and can lead to a more polished, profitable performance.

Stage four is the digital interaction stage where both teams (SEO and those tasked with UX) work together to optimise performance and boost conversions.

Up next is the work on the website footprint. This is where the SEO team look at the data and give a larger viewpoint of the customer journey. Those working on the UX side of things continue to test.

The final stage is the review where teams build upon what they have learnt and update, the navigation of a site or things like meta data. This is also the stage where they refine the strategy for moving forward.

TOP TIPS FOR CREATING GREAT UX

When it comes to implementing changes in order to boost UX here are some of the things that you should be mindful of:

Branding
One of the first things that you should do is to make sure that your branding is attractive and memorable. Although this may be a task for a different team, in terms of SEO it is important that you are mentioning your brand alongside all of the relevant searches and in terms of UX there is a lot to be said for reinforcing the branding message across the site and keep it front of mind. This is especially important when it comes to gaining return visits.

Layout and consistency
Keep the navigation the same for your site and make all of the buttons easily recognisable. If you are able to do this people will know where they need to go in order to find the information that they need. It will also help them to navigate to the end of the buyer's funnel and conversions will therefore increase. You can also add in similar or partner products here to further boost revenue.

Functionality
Structure your content to fit the needs of your user and make sure that the design of the site is responsive. Speed is also important here especially in B2C sites, particularly those in retail, where a customer can be put off if images are slow to load. Always test and tweak your site speed where possible.

Mobile responsiveness
Talking of responsiveness, make sure that you are 'mobile ready' as an increasing number of transactions and searches are performed on mobile devices. If the appearance, speed or navigation of your site is poor on mobile then you could lose out to a rival.

Live chat
One thing that is often overlooked when it comes to UX is a live chat function. More and more websites are now using this in order to add an additional layer of customer support. If someone has a query once they reach you page or need help with the navigation then this can be a good area for them to have access to.

Data collection
What is the point in having visitors to your website if you aren't going to see what they are doing and look at ways in which you can improve. Look at things like heat maps to see where the users are on the site and also monitor things such as where they click and how much time they are spending on your page. A quick exit from the site could be indicative of a poor UX. Make changes and learn from the data that you have.

THINK LIKE THE USER

When it comes to identifying how you are performing online analytics will paint some of the picture but today's marketer needs to be able to put themselves in their client's shoes.

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. The division of a marketing budget can be tricky and with so many brands, agencies, products and services all competing for your spend it pays to know what will work best. Here at Click Consult we are huge advocates of traditional search marketing and know that if you get the basics right and build campaigns that are bespoke to you and your audience you are more likely to see a growing client base and better returns.

Before we get to the actual implementation of an SEO strategy, as highlighted in a number of our resources and eBooks, we wanted to emphasise the importance of searching for your brand as someone who doesn't know you exist!

The first thing that all businesses should do is assess their current positioning in the market and look at how their competitors are performing. In fact at the first stage you may not even know who you are competing against so this is a good way to find out a little more about who is operating in your targeted marketing space.

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.

It is worth noting that search engines often support a fourth type of query that is used far less frequently and is much more advanced. These are connectivity queries – queries that report on the connectivity of the indexed web graph (eg 'which links point to this URL?', and 'how many pages are indexed from this domain name?').

With all of this in mind, the first thing to do is to run a search query on Google using what you consider to be your best keywords and the most common questions your audience would ask. Look at the results and make notes on which competitors rank for these terms. You can use this information as part of your competitor analysis later down the line.

It is crucial in these early discovery phases that you are listening to how your customers speak, then in turn speaking their language. Brands need to understand what your prospects and customers are looking for, then reflect this knowledge to your website content.

We have previously identified the following four steps for keyword research:

Think like a customer: pick long short and long tail keywords likely to be searched by your buyer personas.

Look for gaps: in a crowded marketplace it can be difficult for newcomers to compete against established companies. So don't compete, find where they aren't present.

Rank for priority: it is counterproductive to spread yourself too thin, so choose your targets wisely and look for the golden ration of high volume, low competition.

Consolidate gains: if you begin to rank for certain terms, don't rest on your laurels but continue to target these keywords as you expand your target list.

Once you have assembled lists of key terms and questions, use online tools (such as Google's Keyword Planner) to quantify density and, therefore, which of these should be the focus of your efforts. Ideally you're looking for the golden ration of low competition and high volume. Also, use Analytics to monitor in-site searches – those customers are searching while on your page – as well as popular landing pages and seek to consolidate these terms externally.

If your content is well optimised and keyword rich you are halfway there. Marketing expert, author, and speaker, Ann Handley said: "Businesses should use different content types to answer client questions and understand their obstacles whilst providing solutions.

"Be sure you know the purpose or mission or objective of every piece of content that you write. What are you trying to achieve? What information, exactly, are you trying to communicate? And why should your audience care?" Provide answers. Be helpful. Solve their problems. Make your content relevant and rich. And when possible provide narrowed, niche content. Ensure your content has sharing value and gives your highest quality visitors what they're asking for."

In addition, good keyword research will reveal gaps – areas your competitors are not competing in, or competing only marginally. If your brand is new to a marketplace, the chances are that competitors will be well established for trophy keywords, whereas there may be appropriate, industry specific long tail gaps that can be exploited for early gains.

UNDERSTAND WHY PEOPLE MAY SEARCH FOR YOUR CONTENT

Great, so you've identified your audience. Now you need to make sure that the content you produce connects with them. If it addresses the needs of your persona(s), it will be read more and shared more, helping it to rank better in search engines. People search for a variety of reasons. Common reasons in the B2B sector include searching to:

- Understand a product category

- Learn about a product or solution

- Solve a specific business problem

- Be informed about new approaches

Common reasons in the B2C sector include searching to:

- Find the best deal

- Find the closest location

- Locate a product or service that's advertised

As above, a basic buyer's journey includes the following stages:

Awareness > Interest > Consideration > Purchase > Post Purchase > Re-Purchase

You can think about this before beginning a piece of content. Is your persona:

- Looking for a general category of information? (Awareness)

- Looking for a solution to a specific problem? (Interest)

- Looking for an enterprise solution? (Awareness-Interest)

- Identifying and comparing specific products or vendors? (Consideration-Purchase)

- Looking for help with one of your products they already own? (Post-Purchase)

- Looking to replace or upgrade a product, and planning to remain loyal to you? (Re-Purchase)

- Optimising your content

Keyword research is a vital part of any organic search campaign, whether it is used to mould onpage copy or to develop brand or product positioning – it is imperative that it is not only done, but done thoroughly and well.

As search engines have improved their ability to 'understand' natural language (from the advent of the Hummingbird update in 2013, to the new levels of query relevancy offered by RankBrain and the introduction of BERT), a lot of brands and agencies have begun to place less importance on the role of keywords in content.

The worrying possibility this raises, however, is that, though it frees our writers to express themselves with fluency and style without having to rely on keyword anchoring, the reduced importance of keywords in on-page copy can sometimes carry over into keyword targeting. Keywords should not and must not be overlooked, and their importance in attracting a potential consumer can be underrated.

Take, for example, someone looking to make a purchase for a new hobby. They are interested in the hobby, but lack a degree of knowledge when it comes to hobby specific key terms; in this case, they are going to be searching for more general keywords and are going to rely on brands using search marketing strategies that account for this.

The best keyword research will identify themes – around price size, colour, etc. as well as gaps in the market with low competition from competitors. By grouping such terms into 'themes' (groups of keywords), they can be converted into pages of content which will represent a thorough match to a number of targeted searches, increasing relevancy and usefulness for consumers – again heightening UX at the same time as improving chances of conversion.

This is a good time to refer back to your buyer personas, what are they looking for, what will they want to know and at what stage in the buying cycle will they want to know it? Think about how you search on a phone as opposed to on a laptop. Are there differences in your own search methods from one device to another? What are your intentions across devices?

Think about the levels of interest and expertise possessed by your buyer personas – are consumers looking for brand specific items, using specific industry jargon more or less likely to want to buy or to need information than those searching for generic, non-specific terms? How can your keyword targeting nurture the buyer journey by delivering the right content at the right time? If you have run PPC campaigns for your goods or services in the past, there may be a wealth of useful information available to you in your Search Query reports.

Once you have assembled lists of key terms and questions, use online tools (such as Google's Keyword Planner) to quantify search density and, therefore, which of these keywords, terms and themes should be the focus of your efforts.

Ideally you're looking for the golden ration of low competition and high volume. Also, use Analytics to monitor in-site searches – those terms which consumers are searching for while on your page – as well as popular landing pages and seek to consolidate these terms externally.

The role of keywords in modern search marketing is in flux at the moment – and there are some which, with good reason, have suggested that the industry should be looking to move away from using specific keyword rankings as a success metric – especially as trophy keywords are likely to diminish in importance (as the way we search shifts and queries continue to trend longer).

However, regardless of the relative importance for monitoring progress, keyword research will retain its importance when determining positioning and importance as well as when considering audience targeting.

HOW TO OPTIMISE A PAGE AND ITS CONTENT

It is a fact that organic search has evolved significantly since its early beginnings. Producing content that meets the needs of your audience and customers is now at the core of effective SEO. However, there are still a few things that are important that you must remember to consider in order to give those search engine robots just that little bit extra help.

Meta title tag

Though it is ultimately limited by pixel length, your meta title tag should be as accurate, concise and precise a description of your content as is possible in 56 characters. It is one of the most important sources of information for Google's algorithm when it comes to deciding relevance (and therefore affects SERPs position) as well as aiding in the ease of browsing for the consumer – it should always contain key terms relating to the page.

Meta description

The best explanation of the 'meta description' tag is as a short summary of the page – a clear and concise 155 character description of the on page content (with a minimum of 90 characters recommended). However, as this is the text visible in SERPs, it should also serve to draw consumers to the page – featuring, wherever possible, some form of enticement or call to action. A good 'meta description' can drastically improve your click through rate.

<meta name="description" content= "This is a concise web-page description">

Though a brand may publish a novelty blog titled '10 uses for unwanted Christmas knitwear', in order to ensure the bounce rate is kept low and your potential readership is given a full and attractive account of on-page copy (deterring the searchers that may be looking for recycling or upcycling advice), you may wish to describe it as: "A Humorous List Of Unexpected Uses For An Unpopular Christmas Gift".

* Note: if you don't include a meta description, or if Google believes it to be incorrect, then the search engine will create its own description based on what it thinks the user should see.

Breadcrumbs

Like most of the other suggestions in this eBook, breadcrumbs are a useful tactic to help both your site visitors and the search engines crawling your site. Breadcrumbs take their name from the Hansel and Gretel story and are useful for helping your visitors find their way. They differ in a significant way; they are not a literal representation of the path your visitor took to get to the page they are on. Breadcrumbs are instead a representation of where the current page lives in the site hierarchy.

Breadcrumbs typically live in the upper left corner of a page (below the primary navigation) and are an easy way to both set the context of where the content lives in your site and to help your visitors

navigate to higher level content. Since these are standard links, search engines will follow them, so breadcrumbs increase the odds that a search engine will discover your content.

Google believes breadcrumbs are important in helping visitors to understand the structure of the site and how the specific page fits into the site hierarchy. It will include breadcrumb navigation in search results when it can.

Header tags

Headers summarise the pages you create for both consumers and search engines – and should be easily read by both. They are also important stylistically.

<H1></H1>

Though wit and humour are desirable for a page title, it is more important in the digital age for it to convey the information you wish to rank for. While 'Book lack in Ongar' is a great headline (one of my favourites), Google's search algorithm is looking for 'Funding cuts for Essex libraries result in severe book shortages' for search queries regarding library funding. Though there is no definitive limit, best practice dictates that you should attempt to keep your titles unique, between 60 and 80 characters, and featuring keywords near the beginning.

<H2></H2>

This is a more appropriate place to flex your creative muscle and generally serves as a sub-title. The tags are also good for use as stand-alone subheadings when seeking to break up content for ease and speed of understanding. Again, it is still recommended that keywords feature somewhere in the subheading – as each header is important to framing the relevance of page to search queries.

<H3></H3>

This is a tertiary emphasis tag – or your 'sub-sub heading', formatting of which should adhere to its role as a paragraph leader, or stand-out line. As above, ensure this header is relevant to the text it precedes or is linked to – using keywords from the text to add relevance to the passage to promote ease of reader and search engine understanding.

Alt text

Alternative text is used with images (and other non-text content) to describe what the image shows. The words used within an image's alt attribute should be its text equivalent and convey the same information or serve the same purpose that the image would. This helps the visually impaired understand what an image is about using screen reading software, and it also helps those people that use browsers unable to download images. It's also another chance to tell search engines what the image and your page is about.

When writing the alt text for an image, ask yourself: if you were to replace the image with the text, would most users receive the same basic information? Every image on a page should have alt text.

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ABOUT US

Click Consult is a multi award-winning search & digital marketing agency with a focus on organic (SEO) and paid search (PPC). Part of global consumer brand business Ceuta Group, we have a team of 70-plus specialists and a portfolio of more than 60 clients worldwide.

Our complementary services include content marketing, social media and analytics. We can also offer training and consultation to support your teams or existing strategy.

Click was named both SEO Agency of the Year and Organic Search (SEO) Team of the Year 2020; ranks within Econsultancy's 'Top 100 Digital Agencies', and Prolific North's 'Top 50 Digital Agencies'. We're also a Google Premier Partner, and a Microsoft Advertising Select Agency Partner.

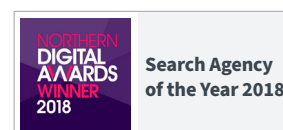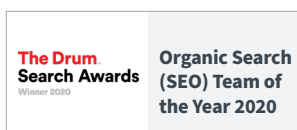## HOW CAN WE HELP YOU?

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