7 Actionable SEO Tips to Your Boost Search Engine Ranking

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Are you just getting started with Search Engine Optimization (SEO) and aren't sure what to do?

Does it all seem a bit overwhelming?

If so, use this as your quick-start guide. This will help build a solid foundation for your SEO activities that you can evolve and expand over time.

1. Content, Content, Content.

Although there are many methods to improve your site's search engine ranking, it all starts with content. Your site needs to deliver the goods to inform and engage your audience. Your content is what establishes your unique value. So it must be interesting, fresh, and relevant.

Consider the content of each of your pages and posts. Start with an awesome title. Write one that captures the attention of your reader and stirs them to look deeper. Follow with a killer intro that tells the reader exactly what they will get out of your content and why it's important.

Make the content engaging. Avoid a big wall of text. Break it up using short paragraphs, bullet points, and graphics. Also remember that content presented in lists – "The 7 best ways to do xyz" – nearly always ranks higher. Learn from your competitor's sites. Don't copy from them but include content that shows your site is more interesting and valuable.

Studies show that search engines seem to like longer content, 1000+ words. Longer content can add a certainly legitimacy of a well-articulated position.

As you create content, mix up your media. Try cool infographics, videos, and slideshows; these are some of the most-prized web content, and they are becoming much more common. Tools

like [Visme](#) and [Snappa](#) make infographic design a simple process. High-quality video and vlogging gear is available for under $1000, and free video editing software abounds.

2. Keyword Planning

Creating the best content in the world won't help unless people can find it. Keywords – phrases people type into search engines – open the door to being found.

The best keywords accurately reflect the content of your page AND are phrases commonly used by your audience in their search queries. To satisfy both criteria, make a friend of [Google Keyword Planner](#) (a free tool that requires a Google Adwords account). It tells you how many people per month search for your keywords. Use this to adapt your keywords to how people naturally search for your content.

After selecting keywords (and it is best to have a primary keyword for each page/post), embed them in your website. Place keywords in multiple places:

- At the beginning of your title tag
- In your meta-descriptions
- In your page titles (using H1 or H2 tags)
- In the first 100 words of page content - and multiple times on the page
- As the URL for your page (e.g. mysite.com/my-exact-keyword)

Search engines will notice these additions and it will move you higher on the search engine results for those keywords.

3. Make it a Great "User Experience"

Google uses "user experience" (UX) as one factor in evaluating how high your site is placed in its search results. One component of UX is making your web pages quick-loading. Optimize the size of your images and limit the amount of content per page. You can test your site's loading speed using [Google Pagespeed Insights](#).

Also, find ways to entice your viewers to click past your initial landing page and stay longer on your site. When they do, your "bounce rate" (the percent of people who view your landing page and then leave) improves. Google equates low bounce rates to a favorable UX (since it is a signal that your content is interesting to viewers) and boosts your rankings accordingly.

A great user experience also means making your site mobile-friendly. Look at every page for both desktop and mobile appeal. Most web tools make this fairly simple. They allow you to automatically offer different views depending on the type of device used by your audience. You can take the mobile experience a step further by developing an app and making it available through the Apple and Android stores.

4. Get Quality Backlinks.

Getting backlinks – links from other websites to yours – is one of the most effective ways to improve your rankings. Google relies heavily on backlinks, but only *high-quality* links count.

What gives a link quality? It should be from a relevant and trusted source, an authority in your niche, the larger and more highly-viewed the better. It also helps to have the clickable text match the keywords on your site and have the clickable text near the beginning of the main content on the page.

To get quality backlinks, cultivate relationships with sites that are important to you. Make them aware of your content through email, social media, or other methods. Don't be pushy but suggest how this content might be valuable to *their* audience. Once, reciprocal backlinks – "I'll link to you if you link to me" – were the rage to boost the ranking for both sites. However, Google notices these reciprocal arrangements and discourages the practice. It places higher value on backlinks that are one-way.

As you get more sophisticated with your SEO effort, start using a backlink analysis tool like Google Search Console to understand the traffic that comes your way from backlinks.

5. Refresh Older Content.

Most bloggers tend to look forward. What do I need to write tomorrow? But you must also keep an eye on your rear-view mirror to increase traffic.

Hubspot calls this "historical optimization." The idea is to update old blog content to generate more traffic. They were able to double the number of leads by updating older content. Especially focus on keeping fresh those posts that are generating the most traffic.

Another way to keep content fresh is to write it "evergreen" – material that doesn't go out of date. Write about themes that will be important to people over time. Continue to write immediate content with a shorter shelf-life but emphasize material that people will be interested in for months and potentially years to come.

6. Create an Engaging Website Design.

The artistic aesthetic of your website helps keep viewers engaged. Your graphic design should reflect both the character of your business and the perspectives of your audience.

Although content is king, people gain a sense of your professionalism and personality from how you portray your content. Make that portrayal compelling. Too often, great sites are viewed less favorably when their design is not up to the escalating expectations of viewers.

But there is good news. All major web tools offer a gallery of design themes from which you can select. And those designs are becoming increasingly sophisticated. Test-drive your design ideas with members of your target audience and with others you trust. Most people enjoy a design that is simple, easy-to-navigate, and graphically interesting.

7. Become a Columnist on Authority Sites.

Growing your website often involves growing your street cred. A good way to do that is to start writing for an authority site. Even if you get paid little or nothing for it, it is a way to gain good visibility in your niche by leveraging the reach of the authority site. It also helps burnish your resume and develop relationships with key influencers.

This doesn't need to be burdensome. Don't look at it as coming up with completely new content every month, but *repurposing*, *repackaging*, or *extending* content you already have. Ask yourself, "How can I use what I already have to give a fresh message?" Any new content you develop for your authority site can then be repurposed back into your own site.

Resist the urge to simply duplicate content you may have previously written - in fact Google actively discourages this practice and will downgrade pages that do it.

These 7 ideas will give you a good start to launch your SEO effort. Like anything, you learn by doing. Start with the basics, and the sky's the limit!

Onward!

Craig Wagner

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