Practical Steps for Improving Search Engine Optimization

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Learning Objectives:

Search engine optimization can be complex, with best practices frequently changing. In this session, we will review the basics and go over small changes that you can make now that can yield big results. We’ll also look at tools you can use to understand how your site performs in search, research keywords and discover where you can make improvements.

Key Takeaways:

1. Many factors influence search results, causing different people to receive different result pages.
2. Google focuses on determining search intent and delivering content that matches what the searcher wants. With this in mind, optimizing your content to be useful to people really is at the heart of modern SEO.
3. Don’t try to game the system. It doesn’t work and can be penalized.
4. In your SEO efforts, it makes sense to focus on what’s essential to ranking first, before focusing on improving competitiveness in search results.
5. The following are areas on which to focus optimization efforts, beginning with the most essential:
   1. Crawl accessibility
      1. Use Google Search Console to find and fix issues.
      2. Technical changes can help make your site more searchable.
   2. Compelling content
      1. Optimize for engagement to perform better in search.
   3. Keyword optimization
      1. Research the language your target audience is using in search.
      2. Use your keywords in title, labels, descriptions and content.
      3. Focus on long-tail keywords.
   4. User experience
      1. Make sure your pages load quickly and work on mobile.
   5. Share-worthy content
      1. Consider providing social share buttons and using OG tags to make shared content more visually attractive to social media users.
   6. Title, URL and description
      1. Populate these meta tags in your page code to better stand out in search.
   7. Rich snippets
      1. If you can get your content into Google’s rich snippets, it will really stand out.
      2. There are many snippet types with different requirements for entry.
      3. Your business may show up in many like Google Maps by default.
      4. To show up in rich snippets, your site generally needs to be a high-authority site.
6. Consider off-page SEO
   1. Set up a Google Business Profile.
   2. Link building and other efforts to build your site’s authority can help your site rank better in search overall.

Notes:

Helpful Resources:

Tools:

* [Google Search Console](https://search.google.com/search-console/about): A must-have if you are interested in how Google sees your site and what terms people use to get to your pages. You may need to get technical help to set this up.
* [Ubersuggest](https://neilpatel.com/ubersuggest/): Provides SEO site auditing, rank tracking and tools for analyzing traffic, researching keywords and exploring backlinks. While less feature-rich than Moz and SEMRush, Ubersuggest provides what most people will need, with much of it being free or much lower priced than its competitors. Neil Patel, the creator of Ubersuggest, also has an active YouTube channel.
* [Moz](https://moz.com/): A great resource for learning about SEO, with free in-depth guides and informative blog posts. Offers tools similar to Ubersuggest, including some free tools. Paid offerings are more robust.
* [SEMRush](https://www.semrush.com/): An SEO platform that offers a suite of tools specializing in keyword research, competitor analysis and ad campaign optimization. Target audience is the full-time SEO worker.

Learning:

* Google’s [SEO Starter Guide](https://developers.google.com/search/docs/beginner/seo-starter-guide)
* [Moz Beginner’s Guide to SEO](https://moz.com/beginners-guide-to-seo): You’ll note that the SEO hierarchy graphic used in the presentation and the SEO needs structure come from this guide.
* [Moz SEO Learning Center](https://moz.com/learn/seo)
* [Search Engine Journal](https://www.searchenginejournal.com/)
* [LinkedIn Learning](https://www.linkedin.com/learning/search?keywords=seo&u=68130234): Offers everything from intro courses to ones designed for people who intend to do SEO as a profession
* [Why focus on long-tail keywords?](https://yoast.com/focus-on-long-tail-keywords/)

Also mentioned in the presentation:

* [Google Business](https://www.google.com/business/): Set up your profile. It’s free.
* [47 SEO Statistics That Will Absolutely Shock You in 2020](https://expanddigital.com.au/seo-statistics/)
* [28 Google rich snippets you should know in 2022](https://mangools.com/blog/google-rich-snippets-guide/)
* [Schema.org](https://schema.org/): This one is only for those who are technical and really interested in schema coding.