

# Introduction to Search Engine Optimization

Getting Started With SEO to Achieve Business Goals



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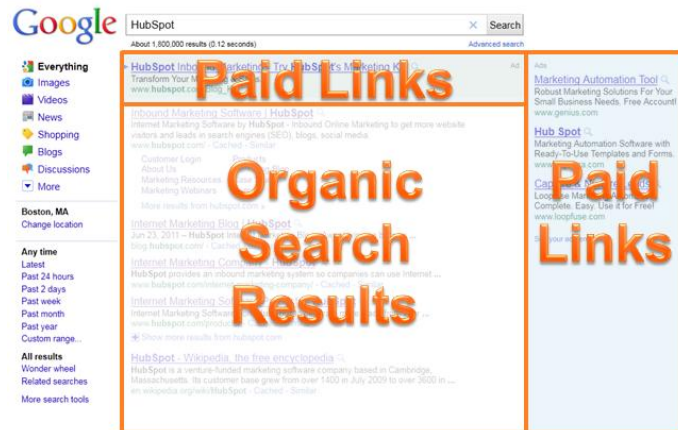
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# Section 1: Introduction to SEO

# What is SEO?

Search engine optimization (SEO) refers to techniques that help your website rank higher in organic (or “natural”) search results, thus making your website more visible to people who are looking for your product or service via search engines.

SEO is part of the broader topic of Search Engine Marketing (SEM), a term used to describe all marketing strategies for search. SEM entails both organic and paid search. With paid search, you can pay to list your website on a search engine so that your website shows up when someone types in a specific keyword or phrase. Organic and paid listings both appear on the search engine, but they are displayed in different locations on the page.



So, why is it important for your business’ website to be listed on search engines? On Google alone, there are over 694,000 searches conducted every second.<sup>i</sup> Think about that. Every second that your website is not indexed on Google, you are potentially missing out on hundreds, if not thousands of opportunities for someone to visit your website, read your content, and potentially buy your product or service. Practicing SEO basics, as well as more advanced techniques after those, can drastically improve your website’s ability to rank in the search engines and get found by your potential customers.

What about paid search? Yes, you can pay to have your website listed on the search engines. However, running paid search campaigns can be quite costly if you don’t know what you’re doing. Not to mention, about 88% of search engine users never click on paid search ads anyway.<sup>ii</sup>

Because the sole purpose of a search engine is to provide you with relevant and useful information, it is in everyone’s best interest (for the search engine, the searcher, and you) to ensure that your website is listed in the organic search listings. In fact, it is probably best to stay away from paid search all together until you feel you have a firm grasp on SEO and what it takes to rank organically.

## Google Replaces the Phone Book

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Outbound marketing as we know it is dead. It used to be that a majority of a local company's marketing budget went to yellow pages, newspaper, and radio advertisements. In order for you to get any business, you had to put your offers and advertisements in your prospect's face. Well, not anymore. The age of the Internet has made it so that consumers are now in control.

It has never been easier for consumers to tune out the plethora of advertisements and commercials they hear each day. Since you can no longer get their attention with outbound marketing, you have to switch your approach to inbound marketing and make sure you're easy to find when consumers are looking for you. When was the last time you used a phone book? Google is the new phone book. If your website is not indexed and optimized to show for keywords and phrases that are relevant to what you have to offer, all of that potential traffic is going to your competitors.

## How Search Engines Work

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Search engines have one objective – to provide you with the most relevant results possible in relation to your **search query**. If the search engine is successful in providing you with information that meets your needs, then you are a happy searcher. And happy searchers are more likely to come back to the same search engine time and time again because they are getting the results they need.

In order for a search engine to be able to display results when a user types in a query, they need to have an archive of available information to choose from. Every search engine has proprietary methods for gathering and prioritizing website content. Regardless of the specific tactics or methods used, this process is called **indexing**. Search engines actually attempt to scan the entire online universe and index all the information so they can show it to you when you enter a search query.

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How do they do it? Every search engine has what are referred to as bots, or crawlers, that constantly scan the web, indexing websites for content and following links on each webpage to other webpages. If your website has not been indexed, it is impossible for your website to appear in the search results. Unless you are running a shady online business or trying to cheat your way to the top of the **search engine results page (SERP)**, chances are your website has already been indexed.

The screenshot shows a Google search for "inbound marketing". The search bar contains the text "inbound marketing" and a dropdown menu lists suggestions: "inbound marketing", "inbound marketing university", "inbound marketing summit", "inbound marketing book", and "inbound marketing kit". Below the search bar, it indicates "About 2,840,000 results (0.10 seconds)".

On the left side, there are navigation filters for "Everything", "Images", "Videos", "News", "Shopping", "Blogs", and "Books". Below these are location filters for "Cambridge, MA" and "Any time" (with options for Past hour, Past 24 hours, Past 2 days, Past week, Past month, Past year, and Custom range...).

The main search results area shows several entries:
 

- An advertisement for "Get Educated in Marketing | inboundmarketing.com" with the URL "www.inboundmarketing.com/classes" and the text "Sign up for free online classes & certification in inbound marketing!".
- A result for "Inbound Marketing vs. Outbound Marketing" from a blog.hubspot.com, dated Jul 7, 2010, with a brief description.
- A result for "Inbound Marketing Hub" from www.hubspot.com, with a brief description of various resources.
- A result for "Inbound marketing - Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia" with a brief description of the term.
- A result for "Amazon.com: Inbound Marketing: Get Found Using Google, Social ..." from www.amazon.com.

On the right side, there is an "Ads" section with several advertisements:
 

- "Inbound Marketing Works" from www.zerzys.com.
- "Inbound Marketing" from www.inboundsuccess.com.
- "Call Centers - Inbound" from www.360telemarketing.com.
- "Brick Marketing SEO Firm" from www.brckmarketing.com.
- "Toovio Software" from www.toovio.com.

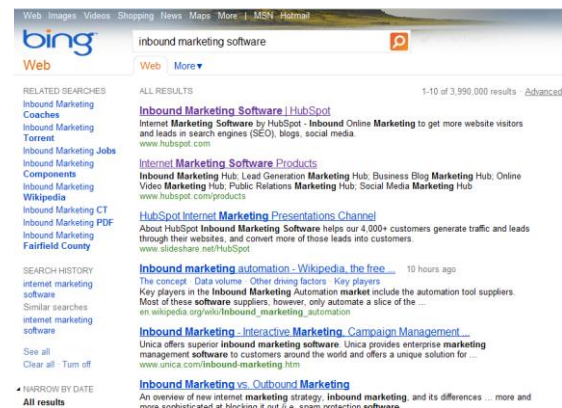
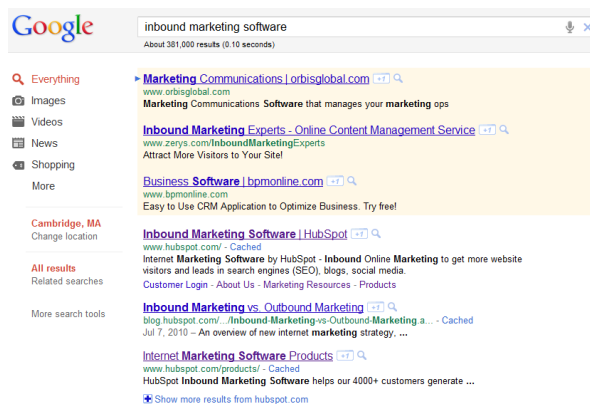
So, big search engines like Google, Bing, and Yahoo are constantly indexing hundreds of millions, if not billions, of webpages. How do they know what to show on the SERP when you enter a search query? The search engines consider two main areas when determining what your website is about and how to prioritize it.

1. **Content on your website:** When indexing pages, the search engine bots scan each page of your website, looking for clues about what topics your website covers and scanning your website's back-end code for certain tags, descriptions, and instructions.
2. **Who's linking to you:** As the search engine bots scan webpages for indexing, they also look for links from other websites. The more **inbound links** a website has, the more influence or authority it has. Essentially, every inbound link counts as a vote for that website's content. Also, each

inbound link holds different weight. For instance, a link from a highly authoritative website like The New York Times (nytimes.com) will give a website a bigger boost than a link from a small blog site. This boost is sometimes referred to as **link juice**.

When a search query is entered, the search engine looks in its index for the most relevant information and displays the results on the SERP. The results are then listed in order of most relevant and authoritative.

If you conduct the same search on different search engines, chances are you will see different results on the SERP. This is because each search engine uses a proprietary **algorithm** that considers multiple factors in order to determine what results to show in the SERP when a search query is entered.



A few factors that a search engine algorithm may consider when deciding what information to show in the SERP include:

- Geographic location of the searcher
- Historical performance of a listing (clicks, bounce rates, etc.)
- Link quality (reciprocal vs. one-way)
- Webpage content (keywords, tags, pictures)
- Back end code or HTML of webpage
- Link type (social media sharing, link from media outlet, blog, etc.)

With a 200B market cap<sup>iii</sup>, Google dominates the search engine market. Google became the leader by fundamentally revolutionizing the way search engines work and giving searchers better results with their advanced algorithm. With 64% market share, according to Compete, Inc., Google is still viewed as the primary innovator and master in the space.



**Web Search Market Share and Volume**

(Top web search engine's share of searches and query volume\*)



Engine	Market Share			Share Change		Query Volume (millions)			Volume Change		Unique Visitors (millions)			Volume Change	
	May-11	Apr-11	May-10	M-O-M	Y-O-Y	May-11	Apr-11	May-10	M-O-M	Y-O-Y	May-11	Apr-11	May-10	M-O-M	Y-O-Y
Google	63.6%	63.8%	73.9%	-0.2ppt	-10.3ppt	9,510	9,299	10,861	2.3%	-12.4%	138	136	162	1.9%	-14.7%
Bing Powered**	31.6%	31.2%	-	0.4ppt	-	4,726	4,549	-	3.9%	-	-	-	-	-	-
MSFT	17.0%	17.1%	9.7%	-0.1ppt	7.3ppt	2,537	2,491	1,422	1.8%	78.3%	93	88	61	5.8%	53.0%
Yahoo!	14.6%	14.1%	13.3%	0.5ppt	1.3ppt	2,189	2,058	1,951	6.3%	12.2%	81	78	92	4.0%	-12.0%
Ask	4.0%	4.3%	2.6%	-0.3ppt	1.4ppt	601	623	389	-3.6%	54.3%	93	92	65	1.4%	42.7%
AOL	0.8%	0.8%	0.6%	0ppt	0.2ppt	116	110	81	6.1%	43.5%	8	8	8	5.6%	5.1%
Total	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	-	-	14,953	14,581	14,705	2.5%	1.7%	-	-	-	-	-

\* The following actions are considered to be a query: hitting the "enter" key after inputting a search term, clicking on a search button, and clicking on a SERP listing.

\*\* Bing Powered results for Yahoo! were rolled out throughout August 2010.

Before the days of Google (circa 1997), search engines relied solely on indexing web page content and considering factors like keyword density in order to determine what results to put at the top of the SERP. This approach gave way to what are referred to as **black-hat SEO** tactics, as website engineers began intentionally stuffing their webpages with keywords so they would rank at the top of the search engines, even if their webpages were completely irrelevant to the search result.

## What it Takes to Rank

It is not difficult to get your website to index and even rank on the search engines. However, getting your website to rank for specific keywords can be tricky. There are essentially 3 elements that a search engine considers when determining where to list a website on the SERP: rank, authority, and relevance.

### Rank

Rank is the position that your website physically falls in on the SERP when a specific search query is entered. If you are the first website in the organic section of the SERP (don't be confused by the paid ads at the very top), then your rank is 1. If your website is in the second position, your rank is 2, and so on. As discussed previously in How Search Engines Work, your rank is an indicator of how relevant and authoritative your website is in the eyes of the search engine, as it relates to the search query entered.

The screenshot shows a Google search for "carpet installation" with approximately 62,400,000 results. On the left, there are search filters for "Everything", "Images", "Videos", "News", "Shopping", "Places", and "More". Below these are filters for "Cambridge, MA" (with a "Change location" option), "Any time" (with options for Past hour, Past 24 hours, Past week, Past month, Past 3 months, Past year, and Custom range...), and "All results".

The search results are as follows:

- Result 1 (highlighted with an orange box):** [Carpet Installation - 110% Low Price Guarantee. | Luna.com](#) (+7) Q. [www.luna.com](#). Plus Free Installation and Pad Upgrade. [70% Off Carpet Sale - Quality, Name-Brand Carpet | empiretoday.com](#) (+7) Q. [www.empiretoday.com](#). Summer Blowout Sale. Ends 8/21. [Carpet Installation - Upfront Pricing, Quality Service.](#) (+7) Q. [www.woburnflooring.com](#). Free Estimates - Call 781-312-7137.
- Result 2 (highlighted with an orange box and labeled #1):** [Empire Today - Carpet, Hardwood, Laminate & Ceramic Flooring](#) (+7) Q. [www.empiretoday.com/](#) - Cached. We specialize in **carpets**, laminate and hardwood flooring, area rugs, window ... Empire Today offers next day **installation** on **carpet**, hardwood, laminate, ... [Carpet - Hardwood Flooring - Laminate Flooring - Special Online Offers](#).
- Result 3 (highlighted with an orange box and labeled #2):** [Carpet Installation](#) (+7) Q. [www.lowes.com/cd\\_Carpet+Installation\\_134470449\\_](#) - Cached. This FREE offer only includes labor for **installation** of STAINMASTER® **carpet** and STAINMASTER® **carpet** pad purchased from Lowe's. Offer not valid on ...
- Result 4 (highlighted with an orange box and labeled #3):** [Carpet Flooring-Affordable Carpet Installation](#) (+7) Q. [www.homedepot.com/.../ContentView?...Carpet\\_Installation...](#) - Cached. Professional **carpet installation** by The Home Depot the brand you trust. Get carpet flooring installed in your home by experienced experts.

Tracking how your website ranks for a specific keyword over time is a good way to determine if your SEO techniques are having an impact. However, since there are so many other factors beyond your control when it comes to ranking, do not obsess over it. If your website jumps 1-5 spots from time to time, that's to be expected. It's when you jump 10, 20, 30 spots up in the rankings that it makes sense to pat yourself on the back.

## Authority

As previously discussed in the How Search Engines Work section, search engines determine how authoritative and credible a website's content is by calculating how many inbound links (links from other websites) it has. However, the number of inbound links does not necessarily correlate with higher rankings. The search engines also look at how authoritative the websites that link to you are, what anchor text is used to link to your website, and other factors such as the age of your domain.

You can track over time how authoritative your website is by monitoring a few different metrics. There are a variety of tools to help you keep track. HubSpot offers a free tool called [Website Grader](#) that will show you how many domains are linking to your website, and also provide your website's

Moz rank. MozRank is [SEOMoz's](#) general, logarithmically scaled 10-point measure of global link authority or popularity. It is very similar in purpose to the measures of link importance used by the search engines (e.g., Google's PageRank).

## Relevance

Relevance is a one of the most critical factors of SEO. The search engines are not only looking to see that you are using certain keywords, but they are also looking for clues to determine how relevant your content is to a specific search query. Besides actual text on your webpages, the search engines will review your website's structure, use of keywords in your URLs, page formatting (such as bolded text), and what keywords are in the headline of the webpage versus those in the body text.

While there is no way to track how relevant your website is, there are some SEO basics you can practice to cover your bases and make sure you are giving the search engines every possible opportunity to consider your website. We'll get to that in just a bit.

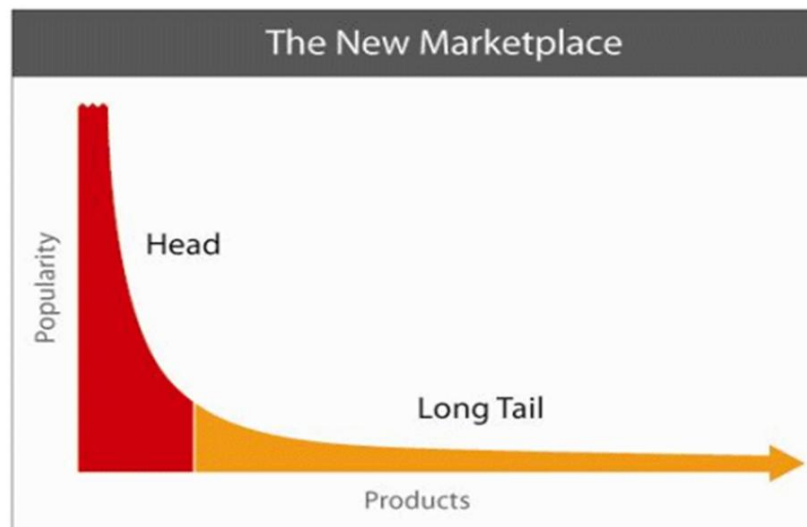
Search engines are extremely complex. Bottom line: the search engines are trying to think like human beings. It is very easy to get caught up in modifying your website's content just so you rank on the search engines. When in doubt, always err on the side of providing relevant and coherent content that your website's audience (your prospects) can digest. If you find yourself doing something solely for the search engines, you should take a moment to ask yourself why.

## Long-Tail Concept & Theory

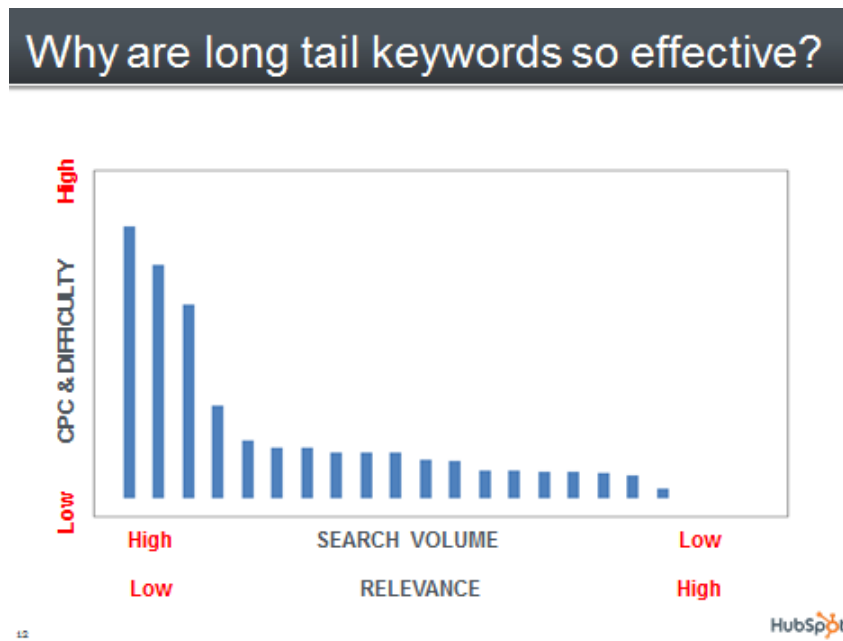
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In order to get your website's content to rank on the search engines, you need to take the path of least resistance. Although trying to rank for highly trafficked keywords and terms may seem like a logical approach, it will most likely lead to a lot of frustration and wasted resources. Also, even if you end up getting traffic from these types of keywords, chances are the quality of the traffic will be low due to disinterest in what you specifically have to offer.

Think of every search query as being like a snowflake - they are all different. There are billions more unique search queries than there are generic ones. In fact, if you were to add up all search engine traffic that comes from the most popular keywords, it would not even come close to the amount of traffic that comes from searches using those more unique queries. This is called the theory of the **long-tail**.



A critical component of SEO is choosing the right keywords for optimization. If you sell shoes, you may want your website to rank for "shoe store," (a **head term**), but chances are you are going to have some trouble there. However, if you optimize multiple pages on your website for each specific pair of shoes that you sell, you are going to have much more success and it will be easier to rank on the SERP. A keyword like "red tennis shoes with Velcro" (a **long-tail keyword or term**) is a good example. Sure, the number of people that search for this keyword will be much lower than the number that search for "shoe store," but you can almost bet that those searchers are much farther down the sales funnel and may be ready to buy.



This is why long-tail keywords are so effective. They target people who are looking to perform a specific action, like buy something, or looking for a specific piece of information, like a how-to or a service that can solve their problem. By choosing to optimize with long-tail keywords, you will find it easier to rank on the search engines, drive qualified traffic, and turn that traffic into leads and customers.

## Content is King

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We've all heard it - when it comes to SEO, content is king. Without rich content, you will find it difficult to rank for specific keywords and drive traffic to your website. Additionally, if your content does not provide value or engage users, you will be far less likely to drive leads and customers.

It is impossible to predict how people will search for content and exactly what keywords they are going to use. The only way to combat this is to generate content and lots of it. The more content and webpages you publish, the more chances you have at ranking on the search engines. Lottery tickets are a good analogy here. The more lottery tickets you have, the higher the odds are that you will win. Imagine that every webpage you create is a lottery ticket. The more

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webpages you have, the higher your chances are of ranking in the search engines.

As you already know, the search engines are smart. If you create multiple webpages about the same exact topic, you are wasting your time. You need to create lots of content that covers lots of topics. There are multiple ways you can use content to expand your online presence and increase your chances of ranking without being repetitive. Here are few examples:

**Homepage:** Use your homepage to cover your overall value proposition and high-level messaging. If there was ever a place to optimize for more generic keywords, it is your homepage.

**Product/Service Pages:** If you offer products and/or services, create a unique webpage for each one of them.

**Resource Center:** Provide a webpage that offers links to other places on your website that cover education, advice, and tips.

**Blog:** Blogging is an incredible way to stay current and fresh while making it easy to generate tons of content. Blogging on a regular basis (once per week is ideal) can have a dramatic impact on SEO because every blog post is a new webpage.

While conducting SEO research, you may come across articles that discuss being mindful of **keyword density** (how often you mention a keyword on a page). Although following an approach like this may seem technically sound, it is not recommended. Remember: do not write content for the search engines. Write content for your audience and everything else will follow. Make sure each webpage has a clear objective and remains focused on one topic, and you will do just fine.

## How to Approach Your SEO Strategy

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When developing an SEO strategy, it is best to split your initiatives into two buckets: on-page SEO and off-page SEO. On-page SEO covers everything you can control on each specific webpage and across your website to make it easy

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for the search engines to find, index, and understand the topical nature of your content. Off-page SEO covers all aspects of SEO that happen off your website to garner quality inbound links. Let's dive into on-page SEO first, and then we'll tackle off-page SEO in the next section.



## Section 2: On-Page SEO



There are multiple elements *on your website* that you can control to make it easy for the search engines to index your content and understand what it is all about.

## Website Content

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As mentioned in the Content is King section, you want to write content that your audience will find valuable and engaging. Aside from the topical nature of the content, the way you format your webpages can have an impact on how the search engine bots digest your content. Every webpage you create should have a thought-provoking headline to grab the reader's attention, and should also include the keyword or phrase that the webpage covers. Other body formatting, such as bolding certain keywords or phrases, can help stress the importance of phrases you are optimizing for.



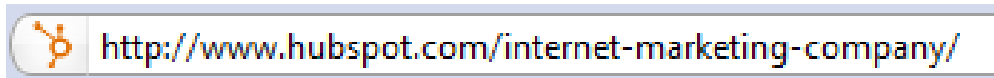
## URL Structure

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The actual structure of your website URL can have an impact on the search engines' ability to index and understand your website's content. Opting for a more organized URL structure will have the greatest impact. Some website

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creation software will insert arbitrary numbers and code in the URL. Although this may be optimal for the software, it serves no other purpose. If you can edit the URL to include the title of your webpage, you should do so. In fact, some website creation software, like HubSpot, will automatically create URLs based off of your webpage content in order to eliminate this issue.



## Pictures

There is nothing worse than landing on a webpage and being faced with mountains of text. Not only are pictures a great way to break up sections of text, but they also serve as an opportunity to communicate with the search engines. Because search engines cannot tell what a picture is by scanning it, they look for clues in two places.

Every picture you upload to your website will have a file name. When the picture is inserted on your website, the picture's file name actually lives in your website's sources code, or **HTML**. Since the search engines scan your website's code, you should use file names that describe the picture. For example, 'red-tennis-shoes-velcro.jpg' is much more useful than 'pic12345.jpg'.

Additionally, you can give the search engines an extra hand by including alt tags on all pictures on your website. **Alt tags** are short snippets of code that allow you to tag each photo on your site with a short text blurb.

### Free eBook: "How to Use Facebook for Business: An Introductory Guide" for 2011

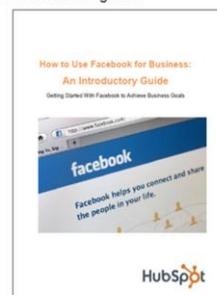
*Learn how to start using Facebook in 2011 to achieve your business goals!*

Facebook is the most popular social network, and with over 750 million users, it can serve as an important marketing tool for any business. Let's face it: your prospects are on Facebook whether you like it or not.

A successfully maintained Facebook presence can help your business:

- Get found by potential customers
- Connect and engage with current customers
- Create a community around your brand
- Promote and expand the reach of your content
- Generate leads!

Our "How to Use Facebook for Business" eBook is an introductory guide to help you get started using Facebook for business. You'll learn how to:



Alt text for image:

```
<img src=
"http://www.hubspot.com/images/fa
cebook-for-business-cover-page.png"
alt="Facebook for Business eBook">
```

## Title Tags & Meta Tags

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Besides an actual text headline on your page, every webpage you create has a title tag. This is the text snippet that appears in the upper left corner or on the tabs of your web browser. Also, the title tag is the blue link that the search engines show when they list your webpage on the SERP. Title tags max out at 75 characters, so choose your words wisely.

Meta tags are snippets of code you can include within your webpage's HTML. The meta tags are usually located near the title tag code in the head of your HTML. There are two meta tags – meta description and meta keywords.

The *meta description* is a text snippet that describes what your specific webpage is about. Meta descriptions are usually the first place a search engine will look to find text to put under your blue link when they list your website on the SERP. If you do not have a meta description, the search engines will usually select a random piece of content from the page they are linking to. The meta description is limited to 150 characters.



*Meta keywords* consists of an additional text snippet in the HTML that allows you to list a few different keywords that relate to your webpage. Back in the day, search engines used this field to determine what keywords to rank your webpage for. Now, most search engines claim they do not even use meta keywords when indexing content. Some small or niche search engines may still use it though. As a best practice, it is recommended to put 5-7 keywords in the meta keywords, but don't spend too much time thinking about it.

## Headline Tags

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When the search engine bots scan your webpages, they look for clues to determine exactly what your webpage is about. Keywords that are treated differently than most others on the page show the search engines that they are more important than other keywords on the page. This is why the use of **headline tags** within your page is so important. By using various headline tags (each tag will produce a different size headline), you not only make your webpage easier to digest from a reader's standpoint, but you will also give the search engines definitive clues as to what is important on the page.

```
<div id="tagline">  
  <h1>Inbound Internet Marketing Blog</h1>  
  <h2>SEO, Blogging, Social Media, Landing Pages, Lead Generation and Analytics</h2>  
</div>
```

## Internal Linking

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Up until this point we have only referenced inbound links, or those links coming to you website from other websites. When creating content for your website on your blog or on specific webpages, you may want to reference other pages on your website. You can reference these other pages by inserting a link to another webpage within a specific webpage's content. The use of **anchor text** is recommended when linking to another webpage or even another website. When anchor text is used, it implies that the page you are linking to is about the keyword or phrase you use as your anchor. This is yet another way you can help out the search engines.

### 6 Ways to Become an Industry Thought Leader

1. **Maintain an Active Business Blog** **Launching a blog** that covers important topics relating to the industry in which you're selling is perhaps the best way to establish and uphold your image as a thought leader. A well-written blog will make prospects and current customers confident that the products and services they buy from you are created using industry expertise. Not only will maintaining an active business blog reward you with a more credible industry presence, but when done right, it will also afford you additional business benefits such as **improved lead generation** and a boost in search engine optimization.

2. **Contribute Guest Blog Posts:** Once you start gaining traction as a credible business blogger using

## Section 3: Off-Page SEO



Compared to on-page SEO, off-page SEO can certainly be more difficult to execute. Off-page SEO entails building relationships with other websites through the creation of attractive content, or reaching out to the people who run the websites. This process of building relationships is called **link building**. Who is linking to you, how they are linking to you, and how your content is shared in social networks and across the web are all factors that can have a significant impact on your ability to rank on the SERP.

## Who's Linking to You?

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Do you know? As discussed in the What it Takes to Rank section of this book, you can use free tools to determine what websites are already linking to you, something the search engines are very concerned about. Although twenty inbound links from your friends' websites may be a good start to link building, garnering one link from a major publication or educational website (with a .edu address) could be worth more than the power of those twenty links combined.

Since the Internet is essentially an inter-linking network of pages and websites that make up the World Wide Web, not every link is created equal. Links from major publications and blogs usually provide more link juice because they are visited by millions of people each day. Therefore, they have an incredible impact on the ability for webpage to go viral.

It is in a newspaper website's very nature to link to authoritative websites that relate to current stories and trends. Therefore, these websites are most likely more valuable than others. The same goes for education websites with a .edu domain, since these are reserved for educational institutions. As such, the search engines realize that links to your website from these websites equate to you having more authority.

## How are they Linking to You?

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Just like when anchor text is used to link an internal webpage to another one of your webpages, the use of anchor text when another website links to you can be extremely helpful in creating relevancy to certain keywords and phrases. If you have the option, always request keyword-rich anchor text for a link that uses your domain. That said, if you have no other option, still take a link with anchor text to your domain. All link juice is good.

### 32 Percent of Marketers Investing in Inbound Marketing in 2011 [Data]

Posted by [Kipp Bodnar](#)  
Tue, Aug 09, 2011 @ 12:02 PM [Comments](#)

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Marketing isn't free. One of the core challenges for marketers is understanding how to allocate limited marketing funds for maximum return on investment. New data released by [Focus.com](#), a website that connects business thought leaders, paints an interesting picture about the future of marketing investment. In its [Focus Research Study Marketers' Benchmarks 2011](#), Focus uncovers some interesting data around present and future best performing marketing tactics.

A common practice in linking building is link trading, or “I will put a link to your website on my website if you put a link to my mine on yours.” These types of links are referred to as **reciprocal links**. Since all link juice is good link juice, reciprocal links are not prohibited, but their value is certainly not as good as a one-way link to your website. There was most likely a time when reciprocal links were just as good as any other, but the search engines are always getting smarter in determining how much juice a link should receive.

Just like any other aspect of SEO, throwing money at link building is bad. Paying others to link to you is strictly prohibited by the search engines. In fact, all paid links must include a tag, called a **no-follow tag**, which tell the search engines not to give those links credit. If you're caught with un-tagged paid links (the linker or the linkee), your website could be suspended from the search engines or blacklisted for good.

Links to your website from advertisements are not counted as inbound links by the search engines. If they discover paid link relationships that are not classified as advertisements, you risk having your website suspended from being listed on the SERP, or even blacklisted if the instance is deemed severe enough.



If you don't have the time to do link building, but do have some cash, there are [SEO firms that you can hire to help you with this task](#). Some firms have questionable SEO practices at best, so it is best to do extensive research before signing any agreements or cutting a check.

## Using Social Media to Spread Content

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Use of social networks like Facebook, Google+, Twitter, and LinkedIn has exploded over the last few years. In fact, the latest figures from ComScore suggest that 16% of all time spent online is spent on a social network.<sup>iv</sup> With hundreds of millions of users across these social networks sharing content they find online with their friends and followers, search engines have begun to take notice.

According to SEOMoz, the amount of social activity that a webpage has on social networks (shares, recommendations, likes, links, +1's, etc.) is an important factor in that page's ability to rank on the SERP.<sup>v</sup> Simply put, search engines have realized that content shared on social networks is extremely influential, and should therefore rank higher. Beyond using social networks to engage new prospects, drive leads, and build brand awareness, businesses should consider all of the SEO benefits they miss out on by not having a brand presence.



In order to capitalize on the boost to your SERP rankings from social media, you need to make your content easy to share. Implementing social network buttons across your website is the easiest way to accomplish this. Installing the buttons is easy if you use a service like [AddThis](#). Better yet, [HubSpot's blogging software](#) automatically adds this functionality for you.

## Using Email to Spread Content

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Almost any business these days uses email to nurture relationships with their current leads and customers, and utilizes promotional email blasts to attract new

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ones. It is no surprise that with the death of direct mail over the past few years, email marketing has exploded. It has never been easier to set up an email program, upload your leads, and send them communication. Obviously, the extreme rate at which businesses have adopted email has deteriorated its effectiveness industry-wide. There is so much noise out there that you need to make every email send count.

Just like you need to make the content on your website easy to share in social media, you need to do the same for email. Aside from having clear call-to-action in your emails to nurture your list, drive leads, and convert them to customers, you should also make it easy for your email readers to share the content with friends and post it to social networks. This will increase the reach of your website content and make it easier for you to get inbound links for SEO.

**Download the Guide Now!**

This 35-page guide covers how to:

- \* Set up a personal Profile, a business Page, and Groups
- \* Optimize & promote your Facebook presence
- \* Generate leads on Facebook
- \* Take advantage of Facebook's advertising platform
- \* Measure and analyze your Facebook presence

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# Section 4: Identifying Keywords

## How to Identify Long-Tail Keywords

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As discussed in the Long-Tail Concept & Theory section of this ebook, the key to successful SEO is concentrating on long-tail keywords. Although these keywords get less traffic than more generic head terms, they are associated with more qualified traffic and users that are most likely further down their path of intent. The good news is that choosing the right long-tail keywords for your website pages is actually a fairly simple process.

Relevance is the key factor to consider when choosing the right keywords for SEO. Remember, the more specific you are, the better. For instance, if you own a company that installed swimming pools, which keyword do you think is more likely to attract qualified prospects for your business?

### **“swimming pools” vs. “fiberglass in-ground pool installation”**

Obviously if someone is searching for “fiberglass in-ground pool installation,” his brain is in research mode. They are looking for information on installation or someone to perform the installation - that could be you! Optimizing for “swimming pools” has its place, but there is no doubt that this keyword will attract a much more generic audience that may not be looking for what you have to offer.

Another factor to consider when optimizing for the right keywords is location-based searches. When looking for contractors and services in their area, search engine users will usually include their location in the search. So, “fiberglass in-ground pool installation” becomes “fiberglass in-ground pool installation in Boston, MA.”

If you operate in one geo-location, you may want to consider adding location-based keywords to all of your pages because traffic from other locations is not going to be that much help to you. If your business operates in several geo-locations, it is a wise choice to create a separate webpage dedicated to each location so you can make sure your brand is present when people in those locations are searching.

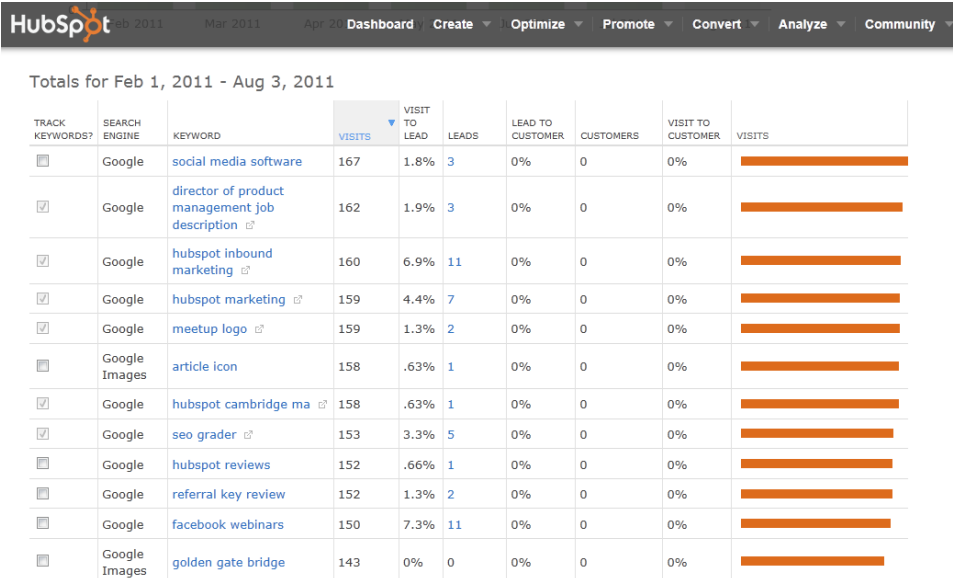
Figuring out where to start when it comes to keywords can seem challenging. Guessing is not a recommended practice for obvious reasons. Instead, there are

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many ways to research and find long-tail keywords that are right for your business. We'll cover these in the next few sections.













## Check Your Web Analytics

Web analytics tools like Google Analytics or HubSpot will allow you to see what organic search keywords are already driving traffic to your website. These keywords will provide a good baseline of core keywords, and provide you with a list of keywords and performance which you can benchmark your future SEO efforts against.



HubSpot Feb 2011 Mar 2011 Apr 2011 Dashboard Create Optimize Promote Convert Analyze Community

Totals for Feb 1, 2011 - Aug 3, 2011

TRACK KEYWORDS?	SEARCH ENGINE	KEYWORD	VISITS	VISIT TO LEAD	LEADS	LEAD TO CUSTOMER	CUSTOMERS	VISIT TO CUSTOMER	VISITS
<input type="checkbox"/>	Google	<a href="#">social media software</a>	167	1.8%	3	0%	0	0%	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Google	<a href="#">director of product management job description</a>	162	1.9%	3	0%	0	0%	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Google	<a href="#">hubspot inbound marketing</a>	160	6.9%	11	0%	0	0%	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Google	<a href="#">hubspot marketing</a>	159	4.4%	7	0%	0	0%	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Google	<a href="#">meetup logo</a>	159	1.3%	2	0%	0	0%	
<input type="checkbox"/>	Google Images	<a href="#">article icon</a>	158	.63%	1	0%	0	0%	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Google	<a href="#">hubspot cambridge ma</a>	158	.63%	1	0%	0	0%	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Google	<a href="#">seo grader</a>	153	3.3%	5	0%	0	0%	
<input type="checkbox"/>	Google	<a href="#">hubspot reviews</a>	152	.66%	1	0%	0	0%	
<input type="checkbox"/>	Google	<a href="#">referral key review</a>	152	1.3%	2	0%	0	0%	
<input type="checkbox"/>	Google	<a href="#">facebook webinars</a>	150	7.3%	11	0%	0	0%	
<input type="checkbox"/>	Google Images	<a href="#">golden gate bridge</a>	143	0%	0	0%	0	0%	

## Keyword Research Tools

Google has a few tools that make it easy to conduct keyword research. The Google Adwords Keyword Tool is a great place to start. You can insert one keyword, multiple keywords, or even your website address, and Google will then return a list of related keywords along with simple metrics to gauge how fierce

the competition is around each one and how many searches it gets on both a global and local search level.

**Find keywords**  
Based on one or more of the following:

Word or phrase (one per line): fiberglass pool  
Website:

Only show ideas closely related to my search terms

Advanced Options and Filters   Locations: United States   Languages: English   Devices: Desktops and laptops

Search

About this data

---

+ Add keywords   Download   Estimate search traffic   View as text   More like these

Group by None   Sorted by Relevance   Columns

**Search terms (1)**

Keyword	Competition	Global Monthly Searches	Local Monthly Searches
☆ fiberglass pool	<div style="width: 100%;"></div>	74,000	49,500

Go to page: 1   Show rows: 50

**Keyword ideas (800)**

Keyword	Competition	Global Monthly Searches	Local Monthly Searches
☆ fiberglass pools	<div style="width: 100%;"></div>	110,000	74,000
☆ fiberglass pool prices	<div style="width: 100%;"></div>	6,600	5,400
☆ fiberglass pool kits	<div style="width: 100%;"></div>	1,900	1,600
☆ fiberglass pools nj	<div style="width: 100%;"></div>	1,000	880
☆ fiberglass pool price	<div style="width: 100%;"></div>	6,600	5,400
☆ fiberglass pool cost	<div style="width: 100%;"></div>	6,600	5,400
☆ fiberglass pools florida	<div style="width: 100%;"></div>		

★ Starred (3)

Another tool worth checking out is Google Insights for Search. This tool allows you to enter multiple keywords and filter by location, search history, and category. You are then given results that show how much web interest there is around a particular keyword, what caused the interest (press coverage), where the traffic is coming from, and similar keywords.

**Web Search Interest: social media marketing**  
Worldwide, 2004 - present  
Categories: [Business \(25-50%\)](#), [Local \(0-10%\)](#), [Society \(0-10%\)](#), [Internet \(0-10%\)](#), [more...](#)

Totals: social media marke... 32

An improvement to our geographical assignment was applied retroactively from 1/1/2011. [Learn more](#)

Interest over time  Forecast  News headlines

Learn what these numbers mean

See worldwide top rising searches by clearing the search terms

- A) Achieve Financial Freedom with the Two Happy Brits' Home Business Opportunity in Social Media Marketing
- B) Constant Contact Launches Free Social Media Marketing Guide for Small Businesses
- C) PR and Social Media Marketing Agency Calysto Communications Wins Stevie(R) Award in 9th Annual American Business Awards(SM) for Outstanding Crisis Communications Work
- D) IndiaVibes: Social media marketing agency
- E) Mail Informs On Today's Social Media Marketing
- F) Stepping into social media marketing
- G) How social media marketing saved the Iceland tourism industry at SES London 2011

Regional interest

1. India	100
2. Singapore	88
3. South Africa	60
4. Philippines	53
5. United States	53

HubSpot also has its very own [Keyword Grader](#) tool, which helps you identify the best keywords for optimizing your site, and also tracks results from each one. This tracking feature allows you to see which keywords are actually driving traffic and leads, and to continue optimizing your keywords over time based on this information.

**Keyword Grader**  
Determine which keywords are the best to use for your website

[View Keyword Summary Graph](#) [Suggest Keywords](#) [View Competitors](#)

**!** We are happy to announce that we have added rank to Keyword Grader. To find out how you rank for a term, please [refresh your keywords](#). To update rank for your keywords in the future, use the "Refresh All" button at the bottom of the screen.

**!** You are saving approximately **\$116,542.07** per month from your organic search traffic

Show Keywords:  Sort By:

KEYWORD	RELEVANCE	MONTHLY SEARCHES	DIFFICULTY	VISITS	RANK	COST PER CLICK	
<input type="checkbox"/> facebook	<input type="text"/>	2,520,000,000	56	702	100+	\$0.62	<input type="heart"/> <input type="minus"/>
<input type="checkbox"/> twitter	<input type="text"/>	45,500,000	57	8,841	100+	\$0.76	<input type="heart"/> <input type="minus"/>
<input type="checkbox"/> blog	<input type="text"/>	2,240,000	65	8	100+	\$1.92	<input type="heart"/> <input type="minus"/>
<input type="checkbox"/> ask.com	<input type="text"/>	1,830,000	58	0	100+	\$0.27	<input type="heart"/> <input type="minus"/>
<input type="checkbox"/> s e o	<input type="text"/>	823,000	83	0	100+	\$3.59	<input type="heart"/> <input type="minus"/>

## Search for Keywords

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Besides looking at your web analytics data or using a keyword research tool, there is a lot to be said for simply going on the search engines and conducting a few searches. Using the search engines can help you answer critical questions like:

**How much competition is in the space?** See how many search results there are. If there are hundreds of thousands or millions of results, ask yourself if it is really worth the time and effort to play in that space.

**Where do your competitors rank?** Pick a keyword you would like to optimize for and look at the top 20 results. Are your competitors anywhere to be found? Where do you rank? Are you ranking at all? This information will guide you in making a decision to carve out a niche for yourself with keywords where your competitors are not playing, or you may find a keyword you think is worth picking a battle over.

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**Is Google providing other recommendations?** When you type a keyword into Google, it will automatically populate the search results as you type. This feature is called Google Instant. This is Google's attempt at trying to anticipate what you are searching for. Google is giving you results based off of previous search data. You can use this data to your advantage. Simply start typing in a keyword and see what keywords Google populates under your search result. This is a quick way to get keyword ideas.

# Section 5: Measuring Success



SEO can take a lot of time and effort. What good is spending all this time and effort if you can't see the fruits of your labor? There are many metrics you can track on a daily, weekly, or monthly basis to keep your SEO plan on track and measure your success.

## Traffic

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Measuring overall traffic to your website from organic search is something you should look at on a weekly basis. This will help you determine if the changes you made in the previous weeks or months have started to have an impact.

## Leads/ROI

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Web analytics tools like Google Analytics and inbound marketing solutions like HubSpot can make it easy to see how many conversions have occurred on your website as a result of organic search traffic and keywords. These tools will also allow to you set up multiple conversion definitions (visits, leads, customer) so you can really get a sense of how much return you are getting on your SEO investment.

## Indexed Pages

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Measuring how many pages the search engines have indexed for your site is an easy way to measure the growth of your SEO efforts and your website. The more pages that are indexed, the easier it is to rank for more keywords. Free tools like [HubSpot's Website Grader](#) will show you how many pages you have indexed. Measure indexed pages on a monthly basis. This number should always be going up.

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## Inbound Links

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Inbound links are the easiest way to determine how successful you have been at off-page SEO. HubSpot's Website Grader will provide you with the number of inbound links your website currently has. Track this metric monthly. Any growth is good.

## Keywords

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Keep a list of the keywords that are driving traffic to your website from organic search. On a monthly basis, dive deeper into your organic search traffic and analyze what keywords were responsible for driving the traffic. Your brand keywords are usually going to be responsible for the bulk of it. If possible, separate out brand keywords and pay close attention to the non-branded keywords that are driving traffic to your website.

## Rankings

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Select a list of the top 10 keywords for which you want to rank. Every month, go in and conduct a search on Google and see where you rank. Record your rank and you will be able to see if your SEO efforts have helped you improve. Make note of jumps of over five spots, because those changes are usually not the result of normal search engine updates and changes.

## Section 6: Now What?



By this point you should have a firm understanding of what SEO is, and why every online business needs to recognize how critical it is. Developing and executing an SEO strategy can be a daunting task. However, this process is completely manageable if you dedicate adequate time and resources to it. There are several things to consider when getting started with SEO.

## Make a List of Keywords

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Do some keyword research and make a list of all the keywords for which you would like to rank on the search engines. Rank this list in order of priority or relevance to your business. This should be a living and breathing document that you review and update at least on a monthly basis. This will ensure you continue conducting keyword research and allow you to make note of the keywords for which you are already ranking.

## Build Keyword-Focused Pages

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After conducting keyword research, you will have a good idea of how many specific webpages you want to create. Each webpage will need content and pictures. Also, you need to decide where these webpages will live on your website and what other pages or offers they should link to. Make a list of the assets that need to be created or gathered and devise a plan to get it done.

## Set Up a Blog

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As discussed previously, blogging can be an incredible way to rank for keywords and engage your website's users. If your business does not already have a blog, set one up and make a point to blog at least one a week. Remember, you are blogging for your audience, not the search engines. Write about things your

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audience and/or prospects are interested in, and they will naturally find you via the search engines. Remember that every blog post is a new webpage (a lottery ticket) for getting found on the search engines.

## Create a Link-Building Plan

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Link building is the primary objective of off-page SEO. Dedicate some time to brainstorm the many different ways you can go about attracting inbound links to your website. Start small – maybe share your links with other local businesses in exchange for links to their sites. Write a few blog posts and share them on Twitter, Facebook, Google+, and LinkedIn. Another great way to attract inbound links is to use your blog to post articles related to current events or news. That way you increase the chances of attracting links from news outlets or industry influencers.

## Stay Current on SEO News & Practices

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Like the overall marketing landscape, search engines are ever-evolving. Staying on top of current trends and best practices is a hard task. The best way is to read. There are multiple online resources that make it easy for you to stay on top of SEO news and changes that may impact your website. Here are a few resources to check out and get you started:

1. [www.SEOMoz.com](http://www.SEOMoz.com)
2. [www.SEOBook.com](http://www.SEOBook.com)
3. [www.SERoundTable.com](http://www.SERoundTable.com)
4. [www.SearchEngineLand.com](http://www.SearchEngineLand.com)
5. [blog.hubspot.com](http://blog.hubspot.com)
6. [inboundmarketing.com](http://inboundmarketing.com)

You should now have all of the tools and understand all of the concepts you need to get started on SEO basics. Now, take your time to figure the strategy that is right for you and start optimizing!

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# Glossary & Additional Resources

## Glossary

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**Algorithm** - The calculation the search engines use to find the most relevant information in relation to a search query.

**Alt Tags** - Short snippets of code that allow you to tag each photo on your site with a short text blurb.

**Anchor Text** – Text in your webpage content that is linked to another website or webpage.

**Black Hat SEO** – A back-handed approach to SEO that involves shortcuts and manipulation of a website. It is prohibited by the search engines.

**Keyword Density** – How often a keyword is mentioned on a page.

**Headline Tags** – HTML code tags denoted by “<h1>Headline</h1>” that make the text bigger than other text on the page.

**Head Terms** – phrases more generic in nature (usually 1-2 keywords long) that garner significant amount of search engine traffic, but provide little return.

**HTML** – Stands for Hypertext Markup Language is a standardized code for tagging text files to formate font, color, graphic, and hyperlinks to create webpages.

**Inbound Links** – Links to your website from external websites that are not on your domain.

**Indexing** – The process used by the search engines to crawl the web, scanning webpages and storing information about them.

**Link Building** – The process of generating inbound links from other websites.

**Link Juice** – The boost given to a website’s authority via inbound links from other authoritative websites.

**Long-tail** – The theory used to explain that while a majority of search traffic results from a small percentage of keywords (the head) there millions of unique keywords that make up a significant volume of search traffic in aggregate (the tail).

**No-Follow** – Tag placed in HTML code around links that are paid to tell the search engines not to give them any link juice.

**Search Query** – Term used to describe the actual keyword or phrase a search engine user typed into the search engine.

**SEM (Search Engine Marketing)** – Refers to all aspects of search, including organic and paid listings.

**SEO (Search Engine Optimization)** – The process of optimizing your website's content so it's easy for the search engines to find your content, index it, and determine how relevant it is to a specific search query.

**Tail Terms** – Keywords phrases usually 3 or more keywords in length that garner a small volume of search traffic but are much more valuable because they provide a better qualified traffic than head terms.