



The beginner's guide to

SEARCH ENGINE OPTIMISATION

Explore the basics of SEO and how to implement your own tactics using best practices to grow your website's traffic in a natural and organic way.

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SECTION #1

Introduction to **your guide.**

Welcome to the Beginner's Guide to SEO, a comprehensive digital resource designed specifically for aspiring digital marketers like yourself. In today's digital landscape, where search engines reign supreme in driving targeted organic traffic, mastering the art of SEO has become paramount for any marketer seeking to enhance their brand's visibility and achieve long-term success. Whether you're a seasoned marketer looking to expand your skill set or a fresh face eager to dive into the realm of digital marketing, this guide will provide you with the foundational knowledge necessary to excel in the ever-evolving SEO landscape.

Throughout this guide, we'll demystify the intricate workings of search engines and explore the core principles of SEO. By understanding how search engines evaluate and rank websites, you'll be equipped with the tools needed to optimise your content effectively, improve your website's visibility, and drive organic traffic to your digital assets.

While SEO may initially appear daunting, fear not! This guide is designed with beginners in mind, ensuring that concepts are presented in a clear, accessible manner. Each section will build upon the previous one, gradually expanding your SEO knowledge and empowering you to implement effective strategies.

So, are you ready to unlock the potential of your digital marketing efforts? Let's embark on this SEO journey together and equip ourselves with the knowledge and skills to propel our brands to new heights. Get ready to optimise, strategise, and dominate the search engine results pages.

Enjoy!

What is **SEO**?

SEO, short for Search Engine Optimisation, is an essential practice aimed at expanding your business's online visibility by improving your rankings in the organic results of Search Engine Results Pages. The higher your website appears in SERPs, the greater the likelihood of attracting clicks and increasing conversion opportunities. Your ranking determines your position in SERPs for specific keywords or search queries, while your visibility is reflected by the number of keywords your domain shows up for in search results.



In today's digital landscape, SEO has evolved to strike a delicate balance between satisfying search engines and delivering an exceptional user experience. To achieve this balance, it is crucial to have a deep understanding of your target audience's search behaviour, the keywords they use, and their preferred content types. By finding the right formula, you can effectively satisfy search engines and connect with online searchers to guide them to the products or services your business offers.

At some point, you may have wondered whether SEO is necessary for your business. The answer is almost always a resounding yes. Unless your business operates in an extremely niche market with little to no competition, which is increasingly rare in today's digital landscape, implementing effective SEO strategies is crucial. SEO stands as the most cost-effective long-term tactic to incorporate into your marketing strategy. Whether your business is new, established, large, or small, the benefits of SEO can be harnessed to enhance your online presence and drive sustainable growth.

Why is SEO **important?**

In today's overcrowded marketplaces, brands and businesses continuously compete for the attention of potential customers seeking their products or services. SEO not only plays a crucial role in driving visitors to your website but also encompasses practices that enhance user experience and ensure seamless usability across various devices.

Over the years, SEO has emerged as a critical component within the broader marketing mix and is now recognised as one of the key drivers of online success for countless businesses. It's highly likely that you are already implementing some optimisation tactics, as there is substantial overlap between SEO and other marketing strategies. The significance of SEO cannot be overstated in today's digital landscape.



Google's total share of the search market in 2023.

1.13B Websites



90% of all webpages get no organic traffic.



68% of all online experiences start with a search engine.

Being relegated to the second page of Google can severely limit awareness and traffic to your website. In fact, there's a running joke in the SEO world that the best place to hide a dead body would be on page two of Google, although we can't claim to have tested this theory.

One of the remarkable aspects of SEO is its potential for long-term growth. By effectively ranking for your desired keywords, the traction and visibility you gain can accumulate over time. In contrast, paid search tactics like pay-per-click (PPC) advertising require consistent financial investment to sustain a flow of traffic to your website.

By prioritising SEO and aligning your website with the latest search engine algorithms, you establish a strong foundation for sustainable organic growth. As search engines evolve and user behaviours change, your website will be in the strongest position to continue to attract targeted traffic and deliver valuable results, making SEO a cornerstone of your digital marketing strategy.



The benefits of SEO.

A successful SEO strategy can bring a variety of different benefits to your business. As we've covered the fundamentals of SEO and its importance, it's time to explore the tangible benefits that await those who learn how to deliver effective SEO strategies. From increased visibility and quality traffic to cost-effectiveness and enhanced user experience, let's take a look.

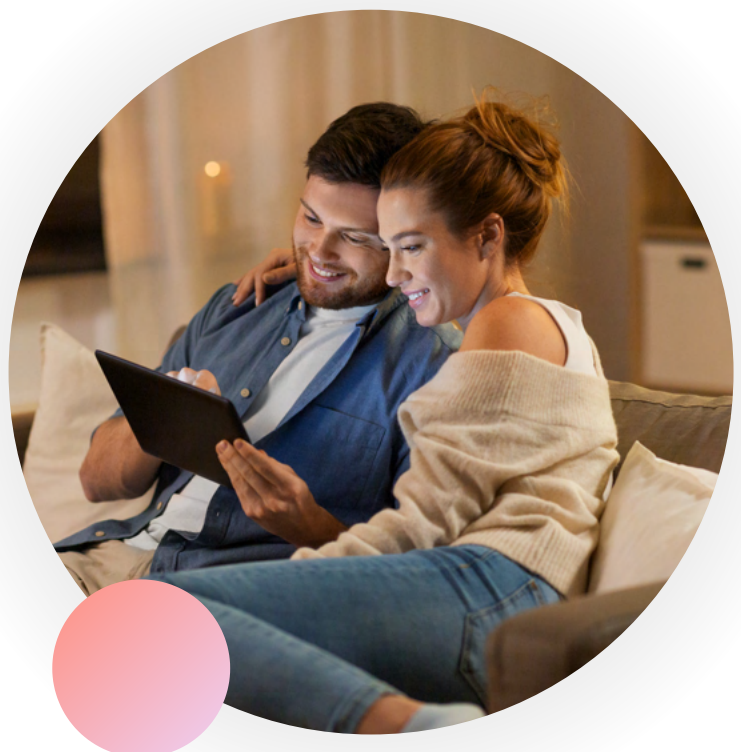
1. Increased visibility.

SEO enables your website to rank higher in search engine results, boosting its visibility to potential customers. When your website appears prominently on the first page of search results, you have a greater chance of attracting clicks and driving organic traffic to your site.

2. Targeted and quality traffic.

SEO helps you target specific keywords and optimise your website accordingly. This ensures that the traffic you receive is highly relevant and more likely to convert into leads or customers.

By appearing in front of users actively searching for products or services similar to yours, SEO connects you with a receptive audience.



3. **Cost-effective marketing strategy.**

SEO is a cost-effective long-term marketing tactic. While there may be initial investment involved in optimising your website, once you achieve higher rankings, the organic traffic generated does not incur ongoing costs. Unlike paid advertising, where you need to continuously invest in ad placements, SEO allows you to attract visitors without the need for constant financial contributions.

4. **Enhanced user experience.**

SEO involves improving your website's structure, navigation, and content to provide a seamless user experience. By optimising load times, ensuring mobile responsiveness, and offering valuable, relevant content, you create a positive impression on visitors. This, in turn, can lead to increased engagement, longer time spent on your site, and higher conversion rates.



5. **Brand credibility and trust.**

Appearing on the first page of search results instils trust and credibility in the eyes of users. When people see your website listed among the top results, they perceive your brand as authoritative and reliable. This can positively impact their perception of your products or services, leading to higher brand trust and a greater likelihood of conversion.

SECTION #2

How do search engines work.

Search engines are driven by a common objective: to provide users with relevant and reliable information. When you enter a search query into a search engine, it strives to deliver the most suitable answers. Achieving top rankings in search results involves a multitude of factors.

Search engines such as Google, Bing, Yahoo, DuckDuckGo, and others employ relevancy and authority metrics to score their search results. Behind the scenes, billions of processes unfold simultaneously. On the technical side, let's explore the primary functions of a search engine:

Crawling.

Search engines utilise "crawlers" or "spiders" to systematically explore billions of web pages. These bots play a vital role in the search engine ecosystem by identifying and analysing the content within each page.

Indexing.

Once web pages are successfully crawled, search engines add them to an index, which serves as a vast repository of all discoverable URLs and their contents. The index enables near-instant retrieval of relevant information.

Search.

When a user enters a search query, the search engine rapidly searches through its vast index, seeking pages that are related or relevant to the query.



Ranking.

The search engine's algorithm hierarchically ranks the retrieved pages, considering numerous "ranking signals." These signals encompass a wide range of factors and help generate a set of results for users to browse through. Google, for instance, employs over 200 different signals to score its search results.

While the search query itself plays a significant role, search engines may also utilise additional data to generate results. Some examples include:

Location.

Search engines may request your permission to use your current location to provide content that is relevant to your geographical context. This is particularly useful when you include phrases like "near me" in your query. 'Near me' queries increased by 136% in 2022 and we expect this upward trend to continue growing.

Device-specific factors.

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Previous searches.

Search engines like Google may customise your search results based on your previous search history. This feature, known as "Retroactive Answering," tailors the content served to you based on your past search behaviour.

Understanding how search engines function should shed light on the complexity and sophistication behind the search process.

SECTION #3

The three elements of SEO.

To achieve success in your overall SEO strategy, it's essential to master the three core elements of SEO: Technical, On-Page, and Off-Page optimisation.

By gaining a solid understanding of each component and ensuring you address them effectively, you can lay a strong foundation for your SEO efforts.



Technical

**Makes your
content
discoverable**



Off-page

**Proves your
authority**



On-page

**Makes your
content
understandable**

Technical SEO.

Technical SEO focuses on the technical, under-the-hood aspects of your website that impact search engine crawling and indexing. It involves optimising elements such as website speed, mobile-friendliness, site architecture, URL structure, crawlability, and indexing directives. Technical SEO ensures that search engines can easily access, understand, and index your website, laying the groundwork for improved visibility and rankings.

Website security.

Ensuring the security of your website is not only crucial for protecting your users' data but also plays a role in your SEO performance. Google considers website security as a top-ranking factor and one important aspect is implementing HTTPS (Hypertext Transfer Protocol Secure). HTTPS encrypts the data transmitted between your website and users, providing a secure connection.

Although Google confirmed the importance of HTTPS, an SSL certificate verifying your website's legitimacy will not impact your website's SEO. While the impact of moving to HTTPS may not be drastic, it significantly improves the user experience and builds trust with your visitors. Web browsers now display warning messages to users when visiting non-HTTPS websites, leading to higher bounce rates.



Your site architecture.

Creating a user-friendly website navigation system is essential, but it's equally important to ensure that search engine bots can easily crawl and index your site. To facilitate this, maintain an up-to-date XML Sitemap that includes the relevant URLs you intend to rank with. This helps search engine bots understand the importance and rankability of your web pages.



Another way to support search engine crawling is by providing a robots.txt file. This file acts as a guide for search engine bots, instructing them on how to crawl and index your website. You can specify which pages should and shouldn't be indexed, preventing bots from crawling unnecessary or hidden pages and saving your crawl budget. However, be cautious when editing the robots.txt file, as any mistakes can have significant consequences for your website.

Loading times.

Page loading speed has long been recognised as a crucial factor for SEO. Google prioritises providing users with fast and seamless browsing experiences, so websites with slow loading times are less likely to rank well.

In 2018, an algorithm update highlighted the importance of mobile loading speed, impacting websites that were not optimised for mobile devices. It's important to consider various factors that can affect loading times, such as image and video optimisation, as well as minimising the use of excessive animations. You can utilise tools to test the mobile-friendliness of your website and identify areas for improvement.

Mobile accessibility.

Over half of Google searches now come from mobile devices, making mobile optimisation essential. Google shifted to a mobile-first approach in 2019, emphasising the importance of mobile accessibility and experience. Ensure that your website is designed with mobile users in mind.

Consider how different elements will appear on mobile screens and make adjustments accordingly. For example, pop-ups or forms should be designed to be mobile-friendly to provide a seamless browsing experience for mobile visitors.



By addressing these key aspects of website security, site architecture, loading speeds, and mobile accessibility, you can enhance your website's performance, improve user experiences, and increase your chances of achieving higher rankings in search engine results.

On-page **SEO.**

On-Page optimisation revolves around optimising the content and HTML source code of your web pages. It includes elements like keyword research and optimisation, meta tags, headings, page titles, URL optimisation, image optimisation, internal linking, and user-friendly navigation. On-Page SEO aims to make your web pages more relevant, informative, and accessible to both search engines and users, ultimately enhancing your visibility in search results.

URL.

When crafting your web page's URL, it's advisable to include the key term that aligns with the content on that specific page. Keep it concise and avoid unnecessary complexity.

Meta-descriptions.

Search engines utilise meta-descriptions to display a brief summary of your page's content in search listings. Aim for around 155 characters to ensure the description isn't cut off. Crafting engaging and informative meta-descriptions benefits both users and search engines.

Page titles.

The title tag, found in the head section of each webpage's HTML, provides context for the content on the page. Avoid duplicate or overly similar titles by referring to your content catalogue, as this can negatively impact your SEO efforts.

Header tags.

Header tags are essential for structuring your content with headings, subheadings, and paragraphs. Properly labelling these elements not only improves readability for users but also provides context and organisation for search engines. Use an H1 tag for the main title and incorporate keywords naturally within H2-H6 subheadings.

Images and ALT text.

Since search engines can't "see" images like humans, using descriptive ALT text for images is crucial. This text serves as a relevancy signal for search engines and enhances the online experience for visually impaired users.

Content.

Incorporate relevant keywords or terms that relate to the topic of your content. Including them within the first 100 words helps search engines understand the relationship between the title and content. Additionally, consider creating long-form content, as it tends to perform better in search results by providing comprehensive insights and a deeper exploration of topics.

Internal linking.

Including internal links in your content helps search engines comprehend the context and relevance of your webpage. Internal links establish connections between your pages, assisting crawlers in understanding the structure of your website and helping your users to learn more.



Semantic keywords.

Search engines sometimes struggle with queries that have multiple meanings. To provide additional context and enhance keyword targeting efforts, consider using semantic keywords or synonyms that offer clarity.

Writing for people, not search engines.

While it's important to incorporate keywords across various elements on your webpage, the primary focus should always be providing value to your users. Writing content solely to satisfy search algorithms by stuffing excessive keywords will harm your SEO visibility and provide a poor user experience. Aim for a natural and engaging writing style.

Off-page SEO.

Off-Page optimisation focuses on activities that take place outside of your website but have a significant impact on its search engine rankings. This element primarily revolves around building high-quality backlinks from authoritative and relevant websites. Off-Page SEO also includes activities such as social media engagement, online reputation management, influencer outreach, and brand mentions. By earning quality backlinks and establishing a strong online presence beyond your website, you can enhance your website's authority, credibility, and visibility in search results.

Backlinks.

Backlinks play a crucial role in off-page optimisation. Search engines view backlinks as a measure of a webpage's quality. As mentioned throughout this guide, a website with reputable and legitimate backlinks from trusted sources will generally rank higher.

Social media marketing.

Social media channels, such as Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, Instagram, etc., are often seen as separate from SEO. However, they can indirectly influence search engine rankings. Social platforms provide opportunities to cultivate brand advocacy and promotion. Shares, likes, and comments on social media can act as signals to search engines and have a positive impact on your organic search listings.

Guest blogging.

Guest blogging is an effective tactic for increasing online visibility, building links, and enhancing reputation. Consider reaching out to brands, businesses, or publishers in your industry and inquire about contributing a guest blog to their site. By sharing your content on external platforms, you can include a link back to your own website in the post. This not only drives direct traffic but also expands your reach and reputation beyond your own channels.

Influencer marketing.

Leveraging influencers can help grow your brand reputation and audience. Influencer marketing may seem disconnected from traditional SEO practices, but it can yield significant benefits. Collaborating with influencers, whether individuals or influential brands, can generate traffic, mentions, and shares, all of which contribute to your online authority. Additionally, partnering with influencers who have a similar target audience can provide valuable exposure. Finding the right partnerships may require some effort, but the rewards can be substantial.

Business profiles.

While it's important to incorporate keywords across various elements on your webpage, the primary focus should always be providing value to your users. Writing content solely to satisfy search algorithms by stuffing excessive keywords will harm your SEO visibility and provide a poor user experience. Aim for a natural and engaging writing style.



Paid ads.

While some may argue that paid ads contradict the goal of increasing organic reach, studies suggest that a combination of organic and paid tactics can yield the best results. We're not suggesting purchasing links to promote content, but rather using paid means to drive more traffic to your content. This topic warrants a separate conversation, but it's worth considering as part of your overall marketing strategy.

By incorporating these off-page optimisation strategies into your SEO efforts, you can enhance your website's visibility, authority, and reach in search engine rankings.

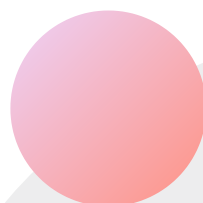
SECTION #4

Ranking signals **what really matters?**

The field of SEO is constantly evolving, and staying up to date with the latest news is crucial. Google, in particular, is known for frequently updating its search algorithms. With over two hundred ranking factors considered by Google, it's impossible to address every single one and keep up with every development. However, it's important to strive for continuous improvement and prioritise key factors that you can control.

Google's constant updates and changes to web preferences and ranking criteria are driven by the goal of enhancing the user experience. Websites that prioritise delivering a seamless and enjoyable user experience are more likely to rank higher in search results. Understanding this underlying objective can help guide your SEO efforts.

To simplify the process, we have compiled a list of important factors that you have control over and can focus on developing and implementing. By addressing these key areas, you can enhance your website's performance in search rankings and improve the user experience.



High-quality content.

In today's digital landscape, prioritising high-quality and optimised content is crucial for a successful marketing strategy. Your content should consistently provide value to your visitors and serve as a powerful tool for SEO. Here are some key considerations to enhance your content:

1. Value and engagement.

Your content should aim to provide valuable information and engage your audience. Focus on addressing your target audience's questions and needs, offering unique insights, and showcasing your expertise. This helps keep users on your pages for longer periods, reduces bounce rates, and encourages exploration of other topics on your website.

2. Originality and uniqueness.

Creating original content is essential for SEO. Google tends to prioritise web pages that offer different and unique perspectives. Avoid producing duplicate content, as it can negatively impact your SEO efforts. Conduct a content audit to ensure you're providing fresh and original content across your website.

3. Timeliness.

To maintain high-quality content, it's important to keep your information current and up-to-date. Regularly update your content or provide new insights to reflect the latest developments in your industry. This demonstrates to search engines that your content is relevant. Review your existing content catalogue and identify pieces that require updates for improved SEO impact.

4. Conciseness and comprehensive coverage.

While word count alone is not the sole determining factor, Google does consider content length as a ranking signal. Long-form pieces that cover topics in-depth tend to provide more value to users. Users prefer comprehensive pages that address their needs without requiring multiple searches. Strive to offer thorough coverage of your topics, ensuring your content is well-structured and easy to navigate.

Backlinks.

Backlinks play a vital role in SEO as they serve as a vote of confidence from one website to another. These links indicate to search engines that your content is valuable and worthy of being displayed in search engine results pages (SERPs).

Earning high-quality backlinks can positively impact your rankings and overall search visibility. When reputable websites link to your page, it increases the likelihood of ranking higher for relevant topics. The process of earning and building backlinks can be complex, we'll delve into it in a later section.



Keywords.

Keywords continue to hold significant importance, but the process of utilising them has evolved. Nowadays, keyword research serves as a foundation for content planning. It involves identifying relevant terms and topics related to your business, products, or services, and then translating them into targeted keywords. This research is not only time-consuming but also essential in shaping your future content strategy. It helps uncover any content gaps that need to be addressed.

A general guideline is to track around 100-150 keywords and narrow down your focus to around 20 key keywords at any given time. There are various free and paid keyword tools available, such as SEMrush, Moz, and Ahrefs, which can assist you in this process. These tools often offer features to analyse your competitors' rankings, allowing you to identify keywords or queries they are targeting, which can be a valuable insight to consider for your own strategy.

Search intent.

In addition to keywords, another crucial ranking factor to consider is search intent. Understanding what your users are looking for is essential for creating valuable content. By reviewing your buyer's journey, you can identify the different types of content that can fulfil each type of search. Google is continuously improving its algorithmic understanding of search intent, which impacts the placement and visibility of web pages for specific searches. Let's explore the different types of search intent:

Transactional intent.

This occurs when a user's search indicates an intention to make a purchase. They are actively seeking a product or service and are ready to engage in a transaction.



Navigational intent.

Users exhibit navigational intent when they are trying to reach a specific online destination, such as a particular platform or website. For example, searching for "Instagram" indicates a desire to visit the Instagram platform directly.

Informational intent.

Google has made significant progress in understanding informational intent. It involves identifying what a person is searching for and providing the most suitable medium to deliver that content. For instance, a DIY how-to query might display a video tutorial, while a food-related question could trigger Knowledge Cards with recipes and cooking instructions.

Commercial intent.

This type of intent is prevalent when users are actively researching or comparing products or services but are not yet ready to make a purchase decision. For instance, a search query like "What is the best smartphone?" would likely generate a listicle article that highlights the top-rated devices for comparison.

Google Page Experience.

In 2020, Google announced its plan to introduce a new ranking algorithm that places a stronger emphasis on user experience (UX) and prioritises user-centric factors. The Google Page Experience update incorporates several existing ranking factors we have already discussed, such as HTTPS, load times, and mobile-friendliness.

Additionally, the update will likely place significant importance on Core Web Vitals, which evaluate different aspects of web pages, including load time, interactivity, and stability. Google has provided valuable resources and guidance on why and how you should enhance the user experience to meet these standards.

By optimising your website's performance and addressing the Core Web Vitals, you can enhance the overall user experience and potentially improve your search rankings. Focusing on factors like fast loading times, smooth interactivity, and visual stability will contribute to providing a seamless browsing experience for your visitors.

It is crucial to stay informed about the Google Page Experience update and its implications for your website. By proactively addressing these user experience factors, you can ensure that your site meets the evolving expectations of both users and search engines, helping you maintain or even improve your rankings.



The New 'E' in E-A-T.

As a digital marketer, you're likely familiar with the concept of E-A-T, which stands for Expertise, Authoritativeness, and Trustworthiness. Towards the end of 2022, Google confirmed the inclusion of another 'E' – Experience. This addition emphasises the significance of considering the experience of the content creator or author when evaluating content quality.

So, what does this mean for you? Google now wants to see content creators who possess first-hand, real-world experience in the specific topic they're writing about. This highlights the need for websites to not only scrutinise the identity of their content creators but also the topics they specialise in.



E-E-A-T

Incorporating the "Experience" component into E-E-A-T underscores the importance of digital marketers establishing themselves as industry experts. It's crucial to focus on hiring talented content creators who have relevant experience in the field. With that said, it's essential to understand that "experience" doesn't exclusively refer to decades of professional expertise. Instead, it involves finding individuals who can demonstrate a deep understanding of the subject matter they are writing about.

To enhance your E-E-A-T, it's vital to concentrate on building a robust personal brand. This entails developing a strong online presence through social media platforms and positioning yourself as a thought leader in your niche. Engaging in activities such as writing informative blog posts, participating in podcasts, or speaking at industry events can all contribute to establishing your reputation as an expert in your field.

SECTION #5

Keyword research.

Keyword research lies at the core of any successful SEO strategy. It serves as the foundation for optimising your website's content, enhancing its visibility, and connecting with your target audience. By understanding the words and phrases that people use when searching for information online, you can shape your content to align with their intentions and capture their attention.

In the following section, we'll be exploring the different types of keywords as well as some of the industry's best practices for conducting keyword research.



Short-tail vs long-tail keywords.

In the world of keyword research, a fundamental distinction exists between short-tail and long-tail keywords. Short-tail keywords encompass broad search queries typically composed of one or two words, while long-tail keywords consist of more extensive phrases, often spanning three to five words. Understanding the nuances between these two types of keywords is essential for optimising your content and driving relevant traffic to your website.

Choosing between long-tail and short-tail keywords requires careful consideration of your specific goals, target audience, and the nature of your content. While there is no one-size-fits-all answer, here are some factors to consider when making your decision:

Searcher intent.

Understand the intent behind the searches related to your industry or niche. If users are often looking for specific information or answers to detailed questions, long-tail keywords may be more appropriate. Conversely, if users are seeking broader topics or general information, short-tail keywords may be more suitable.

Competition.

Evaluate the level of competition for both long-tail and short-tail keywords in your industry. Short-tail keywords tend to have higher competition, making it challenging to rank prominently in search results. Long-tail keywords, on the other hand, often have less competition, providing an opportunity to achieve higher rankings and attract more targeted traffic.



Relevance.

Consider the relevance of keywords to your content and offerings. Long-tail keywords often have a higher level of specificity, allowing you to better align with the needs and interests of your target audience. This can result in more qualified traffic and higher conversion rates. Short-tail keywords, while broader, may attract a larger volume of traffic, but they may be less targeted.

Conversion potential.

Assess the potential for conversions and desired actions based on the keywords. Long-tail keywords, by nature, tend to attract users who are further along in the buying process and are actively seeking solutions. This can lead to higher conversion rates. Short-tail keywords, although they may generate more traffic, may not necessarily drive the same level of conversions due to their broader nature.

Content focus.

Consider the type and depth of content you are offering. If your content is comprehensive, in-depth, and addresses specific topics, long-tail keywords can help you target users who are seeking detailed information. If your content is more general or covers a broader range of topics, short-tail keywords may be more appropriate.



Ultimately, it is often beneficial to include a mix of both long-tail and short-tail keywords in your overall keyword strategy. Long-tail keywords can help you target specific, niche audiences and capture highly qualified traffic, while short-tail keywords can attract broader audiences and increase visibility. Analysing search trends, conducting keyword research, and regularly monitoring and adjusting your strategy based on performance metrics will help you refine and optimise your keyword selection over time.

A guide to keyword research.

Let's delve into the art and science of conducting keyword research. We'll explore the steps involved in identifying relevant keywords, uncovering search trends, and leveraging powerful tools to gain valuable insights.

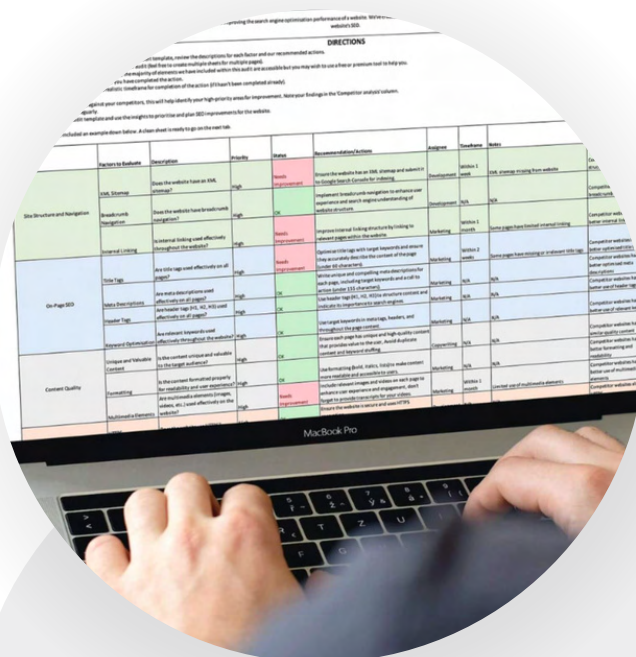
By the end of this section, you'll be armed with the tools and strategies to unlock the potential of keywords and pave the way for increased organic traffic, improved rankings, and ultimately, greater success in the digital landscape.

1. Setting your goals.

Clearly defining your goals is essential before starting keyword research. Determine what you want to achieve through SEO and keyword targeting. For example, your goals could include increasing website traffic, improving conversions, targeting specific audience segments, or promoting certain products or services. By having specific goals in mind, you can focus your keyword research efforts on keywords that align with those objectives.

2. Identify relevant topics.

Start by identifying topics that are relevant to your business, industry, or website. These topics should encompass the main themes or categories you want to cover in your content. Think about the core aspects of your business and the topics that your target audience is likely to search for. Consider using mind-mapping techniques or collaboration tools to generate a comprehensive list of potential topics.



3. Expand your list.

Once you have a list of relevant topics, use keyword research tools to expand and refine your keyword list. Tools like Google Keyword Planner, SEMrush, Ahrefs, and Moz's Keyword Explorer allow you to enter your initial topics and generate a wide range of keyword suggestions. These tools provide valuable data on search volume, competition level, related keywords, and other metrics that can help you make informed decisions about which keywords to target.

4. Analyse keyword metrics.

After generating a list of potential keywords, analyse the metrics associated with each keyword. Look at factors such as search volume, competition level, and keyword difficulty. Search volume indicates how frequently a keyword is searched for, while competition level and keyword difficulty provide insights into the level of competition you may face when trying to rank for that keyword. Aim for a balance between keywords with decent search volume and manageable competition, as these keywords offer better opportunities for ranking well.

5. Review keyword relevance.

Once you have a list of potential keywords, assess their relevance to your business and content. Consider whether the keywords accurately reflect what your target audience is searching for and if they align with the intent behind their searches. Look for keywords that closely relate to your products, services, or the topics you cover on your website. This step helps ensure that you're targeting keywords that are highly relevant to your audience and increase the chances of driving qualified traffic to your site.



6. Consider search trends.

Keyword popularity can change over time, so it's important to consider search trends and seasonality. Tools like Google Trends can provide insights into the search volume patterns for specific keywords over different periods. Look for keywords that have a consistent or growing search trend, as they indicate sustained interest from your target audience. Additionally, consider any seasonal fluctuations in search volume for certain keywords and adjust your content strategy accordingly. By staying informed about search trends, you can optimise your keyword targeting for maximum impact.

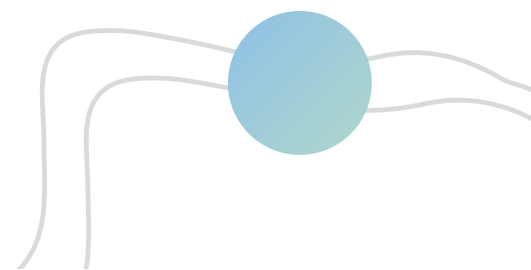
7. Identify keyword gaps.

Conducting keyword research can also reveal gaps in your existing content. Look for keywords that are relevant to your business or industry but haven't been adequately covered on your website. These keyword gaps represent opportunities to create new content that fills the informational or transactional needs of your audience. By identifying keyword gaps, you can develop a content strategy that addresses those topics, enhances your website's relevance, and attracts organic traffic from users searching for those specific keywords.

8. Prioritise your list.

After evaluating various factors such as relevance, competition, search trends, and keyword gaps, it's time to refine and prioritise your keyword list. Remove any irrelevant or low-value keywords from your list to ensure that you're focusing on the most impactful keywords for your business. Prioritise keywords based on their relevance, search volume, competition level, and alignment with your goals. You may also consider segmenting your keyword list based on different content categories or target audience segments.

By refining and prioritising your keyword list, you can create a targeted and effective SEO strategy.



SECTION #6

Link building.

In the world of SEO, there has been an ongoing debate about the impact of link-building tactics. However, when combined with engaging content, implementing good link-building practices can be beneficial. Let's delve into what link-building entails.



Introduction to **link building.**

In simple terms, link building is the process of acquiring hyperlinks from other websites that direct users to your site. Search engines, such as Google, utilise these links to navigate the web, comprehending how websites and webpages interconnect. There are various link-building techniques available, ranging from ethical to unethical practices.

In the early days of Google, links played a significant role in determining the quality of a page and its ranking based on the number of links it acquired. While this remains true to some extent, Google now places greater emphasis on the quality of the links rather than sheer quantity.

The underlying concept is that a link from one website to another serves as a vote of confidence or validation indicating that the linked site is of high quality and deserves to be displayed for relevant search terms.

Today, link building is about establishing genuine, authoritative connections with other websites in your industry or niche. Building high-quality backlinks that originate from reputable sources helps search engines recognise your site's credibility and relevance. It's important to focus on acquiring links from websites that are trusted and relevant to your industry, as these carry more weight in the eyes of search engines.

Follow and **no-follow** links.

Before we dive into some effective link-building strategies, let's review the two main types of links; NoFollow and Follow links. Follow and nofollow links are two types of HTML attributes used to indicate to search engines how to treat a particular link on a webpage.

Follow or 'dofollow' links.

Follow links are standard links that are recognised and followed by search engine crawlers. When a search engine encounters a follow link, it considers it as a signal to crawl and index the linked page. These links pass on "link juice" or authority from the linking page to the linked page, helping to improve the linked page's search engine rankings. By default, most links on the web are follow links unless specifically designated otherwise.



Nofollow links.

Nofollow links are links that contain a `rel="nofollow"` attribute in the HTML code. This attribute tells search engine crawlers not to follow or crawl the linked page. Nofollow links do not pass on link juice or contribute to the linked page's search engine rankings. They were introduced to combat spam and prevent the abuse of link building for manipulating search engine rankings.



When should you use nofollow links?

Nofollow links are commonly used in the following scenarios:

User generated content.

When allowing users to submit comments, forum posts, or other content that may contain links, using nofollow tags helps prevent spam and low-quality links.

Paid links.

When a website includes links that have been paid for, it is recommended to mark them as nofollow to adhere to search engine guidelines and avoid potential penalties.

Unverified content.

If a website links to content it cannot vouch for or doesn't fully trust, using nofollow tags can mitigate any negative impact on its own credibility.



It's important to note that while nofollow links do not directly contribute to search engine rankings, they can still drive traffic to the linked page if users click on them. Additionally, search engines may still discover and crawl the linked page through other means, even if the link is marked as nofollow.

Good vs bad links.

The quality and nature of your website's links play a significant role in determining its online visibility and success. While good links can bolster your organic rankings and attract valuable traffic, bad links can have adverse effects, jeopardising your website's reputation and search engine rankings. It is crucial to distinguish between good and bad links to make informed decisions and ensure that your link-building efforts align with best practices. In this section, we will explore the characteristics of good and bad links and their impact on your SEO.

What is a good link?

A good link refers to a high-quality, relevant, and authoritative link that positively contributes to your website's visibility and reputation. Good links are obtained naturally or through legitimate link-building practices, and they provide several benefits for your website. Here are the key characteristics of a good link:

Relevance.

A good link is relevant to your website's content and industry. It comes from a website or webpage that shares a similar topic or theme, ensuring that the link is contextually meaningful.

Authority.

Good links come from reputable and authoritative sources. These sources are recognised as trustworthy and credible by search engines and users alike, enhancing the credibility and reputation of your own website.



Natural acquisition.

Good links are earned naturally, meaning they are given voluntarily by other website owners or content creators who genuinely find value in your content. They are not paid for or obtained through manipulative tactics.

Editorial validation.

A good link is editorially validated, indicating that it is placed within the content by the website owner or author because they believe it adds value and supports the information being presented.

Traffic and engagement.

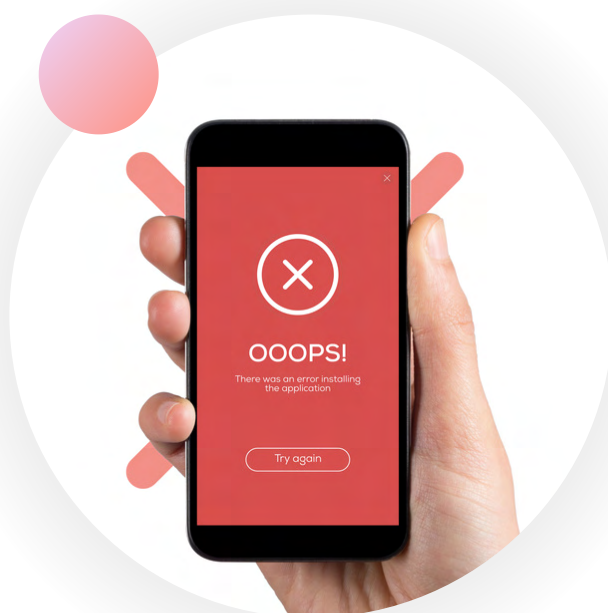
Good links have the potential to drive relevant traffic to your website. When users click on these links, they are genuinely interested in exploring more about the topic or information provided, leading to increased engagement and potential conversions.

What is a bad link?

A bad link refers to a low-quality, irrelevant, or spammy link that can have detrimental effects on your website's reputation and search engine rankings. Bad links are typically acquired through manipulative or unethical practices, and they can lead to penalties from search engines. Here are the key characteristics of a bad link:

Irrelevance:

A bad link is unrelated to your website's content or industry. It comes from a source that has no contextual connection to your website, which can raise red flags for search engines.



Low-authority.

Bad links originate from low-quality or spammy websites that lack credibility and trustworthiness. These websites often have a poor reputation, engage in black hat SEO techniques, or are involved in link schemes.

Paid links.

Bad links are often purchased or exchanged for monetary compensation, violating search engine guidelines. These paid links are intended to manipulate search rankings artificially and can result in severe penalties when detected.

Link schemes.

Bad links can be a result of participating in link schemes, which involve excessive link exchanges, link networks, or link farms. These tactics are designed to artificially inflate link popularity and manipulate search engine rankings.

Manipulative tactics.

Bad links can be acquired through manipulative practices such as hidden links, keyword stuffing in the anchor text, or link spamming. These tactics are aimed at deceiving search engines and can lead to severe consequences.

**Low-quality directories.**

Links from low-quality directories or directories created solely for link-building purposes are considered bad links. These directories lack editorial discretion and often have a large number of irrelevant or low-quality websites.

Irrelevant guest posts.

If guest posts are placed on irrelevant or low-quality websites solely for the purpose of including a link back to your site, these links can be considered bad. Guest blogging should be done on reputable and relevant websites to ensure the quality and relevance of the link.

How to remove **bad links.**

Identifying and addressing bad links is crucial for maintaining a healthy backlink profile and safeguarding your website's organic visibility. While inbound and outbound links have the potential to positively impact your site's rankings, it's important to recognise and deal with links that are considered undesirable. This includes any outlined in the criteria above.

Fortunately, there are now powerful tools available that can assist in identifying spammy backlinks. Although the process of manually reviewing and identifying these links can be time-consuming, it is vital to address them promptly to mitigate any negative impact on your overall SEO efforts.



Once you have identified the bad links associated with your website, the initial step is to reach out directly to the website owners and kindly request the removal of the link. In many cases, website owners are willing to cooperate and remove unwanted links. However, if direct outreach proves unsuccessful, you can utilise tools like Google's Search Console to disavow these links.

Disavowing a link essentially informs Google not to consider it when evaluating your website. It's important to note that disavowal should be used as a last resort, as misuse of this tool can potentially harm your website's performance. By proactively managing and minimising the presence of bad links, you can maintain your site's reputation as an authoritative source in the eyes of both users and search engines.

Link building strategies.

Implementing ethical link-building strategies requires a thoughtful approach. Instead of resorting to black-hat techniques that can harm your website's reputation, invest time and effort in fostering relationships, creating compelling content, and earning links naturally. Engage with industry influencers, collaborate on guest blogging opportunities, or develop unique resources that others will find valuable and willingly link to.

Guest blogging.

Guest blogging, also known as guest posting, is a valuable strategy that involves creating content for another company's website.

By sharing your content on trusted websites, you establish yourself and your brand as a knowledgeable source that provides value and often earns a backlink to your website in the process. It allows you to offer your expertise to a new audience, potentially reaching a pool of prospects who may not have encountered your brand before.

Before diving into guest blogging, it's important to consider what you hope to achieve and align it with your marketing and overall business objectives. While the primary goal may be to improve your SEO, an additional benefit is the opportunity to build relationships with the websites and individuals you collaborate with.

To effectively implement guest blogging as an SEO tactic, thorough research is essential. Consider the following factors when selecting the right website or copywriter for your content:

Niche or industry.

It's crucial to choose platforms within your niche that align with your brand and target audience. For example, a car dealership website may not be the ideal platform to share a blog about vegan cooking. By working with websites within your niche, you are more likely to receive or create high-quality, relevant content.

Audience engagement.

Evaluate the prospective website's audience to determine their level of engagement. Are they actively involved and likely to share the content posted? This will give you an indication of the reach and potential engagement you can achieve by partnering with them.



Website authority and relevancy.

Look beyond the surface and examine the authority of the website you are considering. Assess its relevance to your brand, industry, and target audience. Additionally, consider the overall user experience and the quality of content they typically publish.

By conducting thorough research and selecting the right websites for guest blogging, you can maximise the impact of this strategy on your SEO efforts. It ensures that your content reaches the appropriate audience, establishes your authority, and fosters valuable relationships with industry peers.

Editorial links.

Editorial links are organic links that are naturally obtained without payment. They are commonly used to attribute data sources, such as statistics or infographics, and provide users with the origin of the information. While the weight and impact of editorial links may be debated, we consider them to be a highly beneficial practice as they enhance the credibility of the linked website and contribute to a positive user experience.

Obtaining editorial links can be challenging due to their organic nature. However, they are highly valuable and serve as examples of earned links. With Google's ongoing devaluation of other link-building methods, it becomes even more important to strive for a strong collection of earned links. While there is no guaranteed method for obtaining editorial links, there are several reasons why a website may consider linking to your site:

Unique content.

If your content covers a topic that hasn't been extensively covered before, it offers a fresh perspective and valuable information. This uniqueness can make it more likely for other websites to link to your content as a reputable source.

Supporting research.

Conducting studies or research that supports a topic being discussed on another website can increase the likelihood of earning editorial links. When your data is relevant and supportive, it adds credibility to the existing content and strengthens the overall discussion.

Relationships with other sites.

Having a relationship with a website, such as a partnered business or a company in the same niche, can lead to editorial links. Remember, the purpose of content is to provide value to users, even if it means linking to external sources. Building strong connections within your industry can increase the chances of earning such links.

While there is no definitive approach to securing editorial links, focusing on unique content, conducting relevant research, and fostering relationships with other websites can significantly increase your chances of earning these valuable and authentic links.



Infographics.

Infographics serve as valuable resources that complement the concept of editorial links. By incorporating infographics into your content, you can increase website traffic, boost domain authority, and enhance your SEO efforts. With 67% of B2B businesses now utilising infographics, it is evident that this medium holds significant value in conveying information effectively.

Infographics are commonly used to break down studies, data, and complex processes in a visually appealing and easily understandable manner. To obtain links to your infographics, you must create a well-structured, well-researched, and engaging piece of visual content. Similar to earning editorial links, your infographic should be compelling enough for other websites to link to or include in their own content.

We recommend incorporating your infographic within a blog post or related content. This makes it easier for other websites to link back to your webpage as the original source. In the blog post, provide an outline of the infographic's contents, including details about the research conducted and key findings.

While there is no guarantee that they will do so, having a CTA in place provides an opportunity for further promotion of your infographic.



Broken link building.

Broken link-building is a valuable tactic to incorporate into your overall link-building strategy, although it can be time-consuming. In essence, broken link building involves identifying broken links on other websites and improving upon the content that was originally linked. Once you have created the content, you reach out to the website owners who are using the broken link and suggest replacing it with a link to your content.

The purpose behind broken link building is straightforward: nobody wants a website littered with dead or broken links because it leads to a poor user experience. By offering a solution to replace those broken links with your relevant and valuable content, you not only improve the user experience but also have the opportunity to earn a new backlink.



However, it's important to note that there is no guarantee that site owners will choose to link to your content. It ultimately depends on their willingness to accept your suggestion.

We recommend using online tools specifically designed to identify broken links on other websites. This approach saves you from manually searching through numerous articles and blogs to test each link for 404 errors or redirects. When searching for broken links, focus on websites that align with your target audience and niche to ensure the best placements and save valuable time.

Keep in mind that if you come across a broken link, there's a good chance that other domains are also linking to the same expired webpage. You can reach out to these websites and suggest substituting the broken link with a link to your content. However, be aware that the response rates to your outreach can be low.

Unlinked mentions.

Unlinked mentions are valuable opportunities for businesses, especially larger ones or high-profile brands, to capitalise on online mentions or citations that don't include a hyperlink to their website. While unlinked mentions may occur more frequently than you realise, they present a perfect opening to obtain the desired link.



The first advantage is that a portion of the work is already completed. The publisher or writer has mentioned your brand within their content, establishing a connection. Your goal now is to encourage them to transform that mention into a clickable link leading to your website.

Unlinked mentions can be applied to various aspects of your brand, including your brand name, trademarked products, or services unique to your business, such as Amazon's Alexa. It's important to note identifying these mentions may require some time and effort, so it's advisable to prioritise higher-profile or authoritative websites. You have the option to tackle this manually by scouring content for relevant keywords related to your brand, or you can leverage online tools that streamline the process and save you a significant amount of time.

Once you've compiled a list of unlinked mentions, it's time to embark on the outreach phase. Similar to broken-link building, there's no guarantee that site owners will fulfil your request (as unfortunate as it may be). Approach the website owners or authors in a polite and professional manner, emphasising the value of adding the link to enhance the user experience and provide additional context to their readers.

SECTION #7

Tracking and **measuring success.**

Tracking and monitoring your SEO efforts is a crucial and ongoing step in your overall strategy. It allows you to assess your progress, measure the effectiveness of your optimisations, and determine the impact on your website's visibility and performance.



To effectively track your SEO, it's important to set SMART (Specific, Measurable, Actionable, Relevant, Timely) goals that align with your objectives. These goals will provide a clear framework for measuring success and guiding your optimisation efforts. Here are some examples of SMART goals:

Achieve a 10% growth in organic traffic by the end of Q3.
Attain Page 1 rankings for 15 core keywords by the end of the year.

To gather the necessary data for tracking, various tools are available, including Google Analytics and Google Search Console. While these tools provide valuable insights, investing in a premium service can offer more advanced features and support for decision-making. When monitoring your SEO progress, it's essential to focus on the following key metrics:

Organic traffic.

Monitor the total sessions/users, click-through rates (CTR), time on page, bounce rates, and total pages viewed by organic visitors. These metrics reflect the performance and engagement of your organic traffic.

Domain & page authority.

Compare your domain and page authority with that of your competitors. Tools like SEMrush provide authority scores based on different factors, helping you assess your website's ranking potential.



Keyword rankings.

Track the rankings of your target keywords on search engine result pages (SERPs). Pay attention to SERP features such as snippets and knowledge panels to gain insights into your visibility and presence.

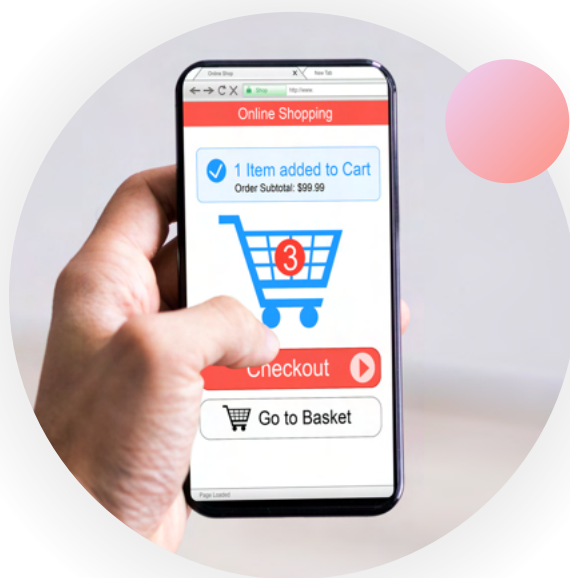
Backlinks.

Backlinks play a significant role in SEO. Keep a close eye on the number of backlinks to gauge the effectiveness of your link-building strategies. Identify both the links acquired through your efforts and those that occur naturally, as they may present future opportunities. Additionally, monitoring lost backlinks can help identify issues that need attention.

Conversion rates.

Evaluate how your SEO efforts impact your website's conversion rates.

Define specific conversion goals based on your business objectives and track them using Google Analytics. By comparing organic traffic performance with other channels like social media or referrals, you can gain valuable insights into the effectiveness of your SEO in driving conversions.



Remember, it's normal to experience fluctuations in traffic, so don't panic when you see temporary changes. Google updates and industry trends can impact search patterns. Use Google Search Console to cross-reference data and add annotations in Google Analytics to note any significant events or trends. This historical data can be valuable for future analysis and decision-making.

By consistently tracking and monitoring these key metrics, you can gain valuable insights into the effectiveness of your SEO strategy, make informed optimisations, and ensure your website maintains a strong online presence.

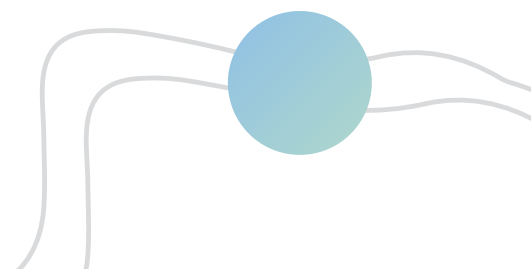
SECTION #8

A summary of your guide.

Congratulations on completing our beginner's guide to Search Engine Optimisation (SEO). Throughout this guide, we covered the fundamental aspects of SEO, including how search engines work and why it is crucial for your business to succeed online. While gaining visibility online can be a challenging and competitive process, implementing an effective SEO strategy will ultimately yield valuable rewards.

By implementing a successful SEO strategy, your business will establish itself as a thought leader in the industry, both in the eyes of search engines and your visitors. Prioritising the needs of your customers and consistently enhancing the user experience are essential in modern-day marketing. SEO encompasses various improvements, ranging from content enhancements to technical optimisations, all of which require time and dedication. Today's users respond better to organic and natural approaches, making SEO an ideal opportunity to capture their attention.

Remember, a successful SEO strategy consists of multiple interconnected elements, and it may be challenging to implement them all at once. Feel free to refer back to this guide whenever you need assistance and guidance in your SEO journey.



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