GRACE ®

Communications Foundation

SEO SEARCH ENGINE OPTIMIZATION

Total clicks
223

Total impressions
17.6K

Average CTR
1.3%

Average position
25.2

Increase Traffic from Search Engines

2/24/19   3/10/19   3/24/19   4/7/19   4/21/19   5/5/19

INCREASE TRAFFIC FROM SEARCH ENGINES

Introduction

Search Engine Optimization (SEO) is a crucially important part of Search Engine Marketing (SEM), the goal of which is to elevate your site's rank in the Search Engine Results Pages (SERP) of Google and other engines.

Why is SEO Important?

Studies show that traffic from search engines, called Organic Search Traffic, is most often the primary source of website traffic: a recent study found that, on average, search accounted for 49% of traffic acquisitions.

And ranking matters: the vast majority of searchers don't make it to the second page of results.

Search Engine Page Evaluation

To understand how SEO will improve your ranking, it's important to know the elements engines evaluate:

- The page's content and its keywords.
- The page's structure.
- Meta Data: Instructions you place on-page.
- Number of visitors and their actions on-page.
- Links from other sites and internal links.
- Where the page sits in your website's structure.

Goal

Raise your site's ranking in SERPs so it sits at the top of page one. Using the following SEO tactics will elevate your site's ranking so that more people see your site and click through to engage with your content.

BEFORE YOU START

Is Your Site Being Crawled Correctly?

Before we spend any time on SEO, it's critical that you find out if your site is getting crawled correctly. To find out, search Google for one of your pages: Go to Google in an Incognito Window in Chrome or a Private Window in Safari. Type in your organization's name and two words describing the subject matter of a page on your website. Does your page come up? If your page doesn't appear on the first couple of pages of search results or the description isn't from the page itself, prioritize fixing this with your developer. This guide should help them prepare the site to be "indexed" by search engines.

EASY THINGS ANYONE CAN DO

Overall Strategy

For new content, keep the following in mind to ensure that your site is attractive to search engines:

- What's your website's "value proposition"? That is, what answers are you providing to questions that your audience is asking? What are you saying that other sites are not? Google is looking for content that owns a specific topic and answers searchers' questions. Focus on what is central to your mission - it's okay to be niche.

- Page Length: Each page should be about a fairly specific topic with a deep amount of quality content. However, don't be too specific. It's better to have one page with 1,000 words rather than four hyper-specific pages with 250 words each.

Keywords

Keywords are strings of a few words that feature the names, locations and central concepts related to your page's topic. One of the most important factors engines evaluate is the quality of keywords spread throughout your pages. Finding the right keywords takes work and research. Here's an excellent guide to researching your pages' keywords.

Page Structure

For future or existing pages, make sure the content follows the following best practices.

- Page Title
  - Short and specific with the most important keywords included in the first 50-60 characters. Ideally, limit the title to 70 characters. The page's content must fulfill the promise of the title. Use action words, too.
- Page Description and Intro Paragraph
  - Include at least two to four primary keywords in the first 150 words. The first link should be internal.

- Ideally, you can set the description that's on SERPs using tools installed in the backend of your website, like Yoast or others, to edit the page's meta data.
  - ⊙ Structure
    - Use HTML to break up and format content on your site. Often, you can do this easily using the "title" or "header" functions in website/blog platforms like WordPress (this will depend on what kind of website you have). H1 is reserved for the page's title. H2 should be all your main headers in the body. H3 and H4 are sub-headers. Ensure keywords are in each header.
    - Use alt tags and content-related titles on all images.
  - ⊙ Here are more SEO tips for writing titles and setting up your site's pages.

Link Quality

It's important that your pages contain a healthy amount of links pointing to the pages on your website (internal links) and links to other reputable websites (external links). In terms of the amount and dispersion of links you're using, think about how your favorite news sites use links in their articles. When you're linking to content, make sure the hyperlink contains the keywords related to the content you're linking to instead of linking "click here" etc. The last sentence of the Keywords section above is an example of how to link correctly as opposed to "Click here to find an excellent…".

Local Sites

If your issue is related to a specific location, this is an incredible SEO asset. Include the location in as many of your keywords, headlines and snippets as possible. This helps cut out nationally-focused competitors for your keywords. Consider adding your business location to Google and linking your website to it - this actually helps.

Build Authority with Inbound Links

Search Engines elevate your pages if trustworthy sites that have steady traffic link to your content. These are called "inbound links" and are a critical part of any SEO strategy.

Strategy: Identify close organizations – especially those that have further reach than you – and look for specific text on their pages that would make sense to link to your page. Then ask your contacts there to have their website team add your link. It's always best to offer to link to their content on your pages as well.

SEO TASKS A TECHNICAL PERSON OR YOUR DEVELOPER CAN DO

- ◎ HTTPS – At this point, having a secured site (which puts the "s" after "http" in the URL) is required for a high rank.

- ◎ Responsive Sites – Making your website optimized for mobile, a.k.a., responsive, is required for a high rank.

- ◎ Make sure your descriptions are used as the search engine snippet.

- ◎ Install SEO plugins or tools like Yoast to easily edit meta data and help writers improve on-page SEO.

- ◎ Submit an XML sitemap.

- ◎ Organize your site with a clear URL structure.

- ◎ Use Google Search Console and Speed Tests to evaluate your site.

RESOURCES TO LEARN MORE & TOOLS TO USE

In-Depth SEO Guides

- ◎ Moz has an excellent beginners guide and resources.

- ◎ Google has a great starter guide and resources, too.

- ◎ Yoast has SEO courses, though they are paywalled.

Tools

- ◎ Google Analytics and Google Search Console

- ◎ Google Keyword Planner

- ◎ Moz's Keyword Explorer

GOOGLE SEARCH ADS GRANT - $10,000 PER MONTH

Now that you're thinking about keywords and how Google evaluates your website, please consider taking advantage of the Google Search Ads Grant. Qualifying nonprofits are able to use up to **$120,000 per year in free advertising in Google's search results**. They don't give you a check, but instead provide a $10,000 budget in the Google Ads platform – the only investment your organization has to make is the time it takes to set the ads up, monitor their performance and refine the ads.

While Google Search Ads do take a lot of time to set up properly and you can't take advantage of all the functionality of paid Google Ads, you can expect thousands and thousands of extra visitors to your website every month.

Strategy

The Google grant is an excellent way to ensure your content is at the top of Google's SERPs for specific keywords. This traffic can then improve your page rankings, which then increases your organic traffic.

Use the grant to elevate the following:

- ⊙ The most popular content on your site.
- ⊙ Pages on your site that may not be popular, but are about a popularly searched subject.
- ⊙ Specific, advocacy-focused searches about industries, products or company practices.
- ⊙ Your organization's homepage and searches about your brand.

Learn More

- ⊙ Find out if your organization is eligible.
- ⊙ Learn more about the Google grant and how to set it up.

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