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# THE DEFINITIVE GUIDE TO MARKETING YOUR BUSINESS ONLINE

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AudienceBloom



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# Introduction to SEO

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SEO, or search engine optimization, is important to every business. It doesn't matter if you run a small, local mom-n-pop business or a large corporation. But what exactly is it? SEO is simply the process of setting up and optimizing your site so that it's easily found (and favored) by search engines like Google, Yahoo and Bing.

Most people, today, aren't going to pick up a phone book when they need something. Instead, they'll go online to search for it. If your business isn't showing up in search results, you're almost certainly losing valuable business to your competitors that do. Furthermore, users that find your website via organic search tend to be highly targeted, making them more likely to convert to customers.

Most businesses realize they should have a website, but simply having a website is only the first step. Building an effective website that will provide a strong, consistent flow of leads or sales requires marketing.

For the purpose of online marketing, the phrase “if you build it, they will come” does not apply. Building a website without marketing it is akin to building a brick-and-mortar store in the middle of the Sahara desert. There are no roads that lead to it, no traffic driving by and seeing it. Even people who need your products or services can't buy from you because they'll never know about you.

That's where SEO comes in. SEO is like transplanting your brick-and-mortar store from the Sahara desert to a busy street in downtown New York. SEO makes your website visible to potential customers so that you can make sales.

Take a moment to think about what someone might search for when looking for your business. If you're a dentist that specializes in sedation dentistry, possibilities could include:

- sedation dentist
- dentist that puts you to sleep
- Houston sedation dentist (replace Houston with your town's name)

Now, search Google for those terms. Does your business show up? If not, SEO is how you get there. Think about it... if you have a website and it's not showing up in search results, it's just the same as having customers drive right by your business while looking for what you offer, and not even know you're there.

## **Website Design and SEO**

Just as building a beautiful storefront isn't the only factor that will result in sales, online marketing isn't as simple as building a beautiful website. Sure, having a well-designed site is important. If visitors to your website don't feel comfortable (perhaps, for instance, because there are too many ads), get frustrated trying to find what they need (due to a poor navigation structure) or any number of other factors that drive visitors away, then you probably won't make the sale.

Let's explore the other factors that affect your search engine rankings: on-site and off-site SEO.

In order for your website to be effective from an SEO perspective, both on-site and off-site SEO factors have to be included in your strategy. What do 'on-site' and 'off-site' mean? Read on.

## **On-Site SEO**

SEO is divided into two main categories: On-site and off-site. On-site SEO consists of the elements (such as text and meta data) that exist on your website, and in your website's HTML code, over which you have control. Here are the three main things that this consists of:

### **Structure**

The structure of your website is very important, not just from an SEO perspective, but also a user experience perspective. When building your website, ensure that your web designer is knowledgeable in SEO best practices or works in conjunction with an SEO professional. Structure includes:

- URL structure
- Navigation (menu) structure
- Search functionality
- Page layout
- Internal linking
- Website Speed
- HTML & XML sitemaps

## **Coding**

The code, the backbone of your website, needs to be clean and efficient. Messy code will bring your website's rankings down and result in slower load times for your visitors. Usually, your website visitors won't see the code, but search engine spiders will see it all. Don't cut corners. Ensure all the code is up to date, and includes proper meta tags, headers, and descriptions.

## **Content**

This is what your customers will see; the front-end text copy, images, and videos that are on your website. The content of your website is the most important part of proper SEO, because search engines are constantly changing their algorithms to ensure they're delivering search results with the most helpful and accurate content.

Your content should be fresh and engaging. Don't make the mistake of writing purely "for the search engines" by stuffing unnatural keywords into the content and other old tricks of the trade that no longer work.

Content *should* target topics you want to rank for, but it needs to be natural and fresh. Google especially likes to favor pages and posts that have been recently created or updated, which is one of the many reasons I always recommend businesses maintain an active blog.

## **Off-Site SEO**

Once your website is structured correctly and contains excellent content, it's time to develop and execute a solid off-site SEO strategy. Off-site SEO consists of factors that affect your search engine rankings which are not on your website itself. Here's a look at the main factors of off-site SEO.

### ***Inbound Links***

Links from other sites on the internet come in many different shapes and sizes. A link is simply a clickable word, phrase, image, or button that directs you to another URL. Think of each link as a vote for your website's credibility, vouching for your worthiness to rank highly in search results.

But not all links are created equal. Just as you'd trust your best friend's opinion about something more than you'd trust a random stranger's, links from well-known

and highly trusted, authoritative websites count for much more than links from unknown or untrusted websites.

So, thousands of links aren't the answer, contrary to what many untrustworthy "SEO companies" and "SEO professionals" will often tell you. In order to rank well consistently in the search engines, you don't need a high quantity of links; you need high quality links from authority websites. There are many ways this can be done, but it takes time. We'll get more into that later, though.

Besides giving you 'votes' to help your site rank better, good inbound links will also drive free, high-quality traffic to your website. A link to your website that's created today, if on a relevant site with the right audience, will still be delivering you targeted customers well into the future without any work or effort on your part. It doesn't get any better than that.

### ***Social Signals***

Social media is much more important as a ranking signal now than it was even just a few years ago, and that trend is likely to continue. Google and other search engines take into account (pretty highly) your social media influence. Not only does your activity in social media improve your search engine rankings, but social media itself can be an excellent way to build your brand, reach new audiences, and drive potential customers.

Google and Bing both look for what we call social media signals, which are simply activities including Twitter tweets, Facebook likes, Google +1's, social bookmarks, and much more. Each signal is an indication to search engines that your content is high-quality and deserves to appear highly in search results.

Let's take an example. If you publish an exceptionally well-done infographic highlighting some interesting data, you want people to know about it, and you want search engines to know that they should rank it highly in search results. If you tweet a link to you it from your company Twitter account, and 100 of your followers retweet it, then 100 of each of their followers retweet the link, you have a wave of retweets that search engines notice. All those retweets are signals (social signals) that your infographic must be exceptionally awesome, or else all these people wouldn't be tweeting about it. It's "social proof" that your infographic is helpful and useful, and search engines only want to display really great pages in their search results. This social proof is a reassurance to the search engines that your infographic will deliver a positive user experience.

## **Reviews**

Reviews of your business will affect your search engine rankings, particularly reviews on Google+. Good reviews will affect your rankings positively, and bad reviews will affect them negatively. It's important to note that reviews only affect your rankings in local search results. We'll get more into this later, but suffice it to say that if you want to rank well in local search results, you should do your best to ask your clients for positive reviews on your Google+ page.

There's more to marketing your business online than SEO, though. SEO is important, but let's take a look at some other important tactics that will keep you ahead of your competition.



# Traffic and Lead Generation – Beyond SEO

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Now that you have a better understanding of what SEO is and why it should be a priority in your online marketing strategy, let's touch on some other things that your marketing plan should include. Technology evolves daily, and to be on the cutting edge in your industry, you should be doing your best to stay informed of what's changing and how you can use those changes to your advantage.

## **Social Media**

To many businesses, this is the equivalent of a four-letter word. Many business owners haven't adopted social media yet, so it's difficult to see why it would be important to their business.

As a business owner in today's social-media-centric world, you can't overlook the power, influence, and necessity of social media when it comes to your online marketing strategy. Which social media sites you should dedicate time to will depend on your business and your target audience. Each one has a different feel, different kinds of users, and different demographics. For instance, businesses in the food, art, or fashion industries typically perform well on Pinterest.

***Did you know that 80% of social media users prefer to follow brands they like on a particular social media platform? Do you know which one? Facebook!***

Are you using Facebook? Are you allowing customers to interact with you? Are you being personable and posting helpful, informative information or special offers? This is all important for a robust social media strategy.

Did you know that many businesses are successfully integrating Twitter into their customer service? It's an almost-instant way to keep up with and retain customers, while also getting in front of new customers.

***33% of tweets to or about a business relate to a very specific problem.***

But these customers aren't just out looking for a way to criticize you (only 9% of tweets are truly negative). They're reaching out. They're looking for help.

Use this to your advantage by assigning a staff member to a Twitter help desk and



give prompt, helpful replies.

Customers really appreciate it, and others (potentially new customers) will see a business that cares about its customers. Chances are, if they need your services or products in the future, they'll turn to you.

## **Mobile Optimization**

Being easily found and accessible on mobile devices is something that every business should be staying on top of; this is especially true for local businesses with a physical address.

This is because people are busy and they want to know things 'now'. For example, if you own a shoe store in the mall, and someone shopping remembers they wanted to get a certain pair of blue sneakers, they may check their smartphone or tablet for stores in the mall to see who carries them. If they can find your website and see you stock those sneakers, then you've probably just made a new sale.

On the other hand, if they find your website but it doesn't display well on their mobile device (ie, if it's difficult to view or navigate because it doesn't fit the screen well), then you've probably lost the potential sale.

If you own an Italian restaurant and that shopper decides they want to get Italian food after they finish shopping, they may search for "Italian restaurants" on their mobile device to find one that's rated highly. If your website doesn't show up or doesn't display correctly on their tablet or smartphone, you definitely won't be seeing them as a customer!

There has been a rapid increase in mobile searches.

**From October 2011 to October 2012, mobile search increased from 4% to 12% on smartphones, and from 4% to 14% for tablets.<sup>1</sup>**

Businesses and marketers are catching on, though. BizReport reported that almost 25% of paid search clicks are coming from mobile search.<sup>2</sup> That's an 89% increase year over year. In March 2012, Google said that they had seen mobile search grow by 5 times in just two years.

To ensure your website is mobile-friendly, switch to a responsive layout that adapts depending on what device a visitor is viewing your site on.

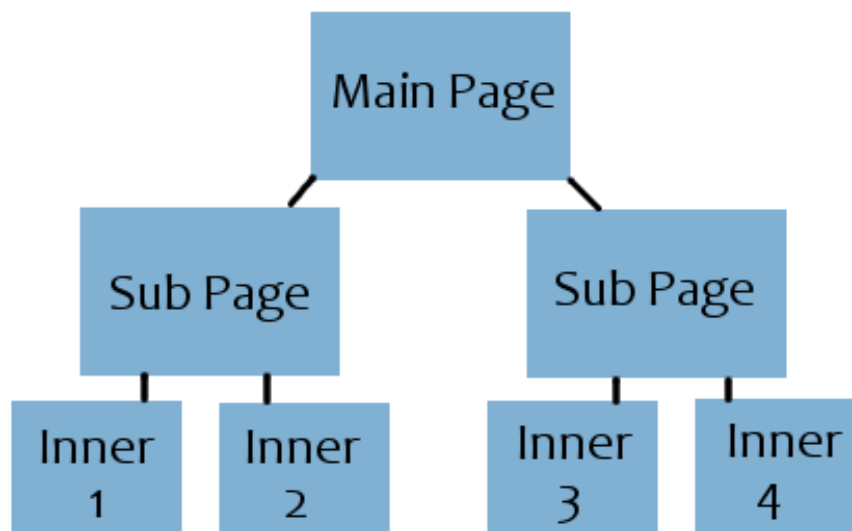
# Website Structure, Content Planning & Content Marketing

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We touched on the topic of website structure when we discussed on-site SEO factors. But we didn't really go into much detail, so here we go. It might seem like there's a lot to learn here, and there is, but it's easier than you think.

## **Navigation**

Navigation is at the core of your website structure. Here's an example of very basic navigation.



The main page feeds to sub-pages or different sections. Then each of those sections are linked to even deeper pages that go into more detail.

Of course, there are many more ways a website can be set up, but keeping it simple is helpful for optimizing your user experience, and that will reflect positively on your search engine rankings. However your website's navigation is designed, it should provide a clear and easy path for the search engines and your visitors to follow.

Navigation becomes increasingly important with larger websites. With well-designed navigation, search engine crawlers and your customers will be able to find pages on your website easily. This is important for search engines because if they can't locate a page easily, it'll simply be excluded from search results. It's important for customers because if they can't find the page they're looking for, then you're more likely to lose the sale.

### **Organizing Pages and Content**

SEO professionals will often want to help with the restructure of your site (or planning if it isn't already built). By creating the right content that flows well into other sections, it creates a smooth interface for visitors to use. It also provides a much more seamless integration of internal links (we'll get to internal links shortly) which is vital to your search rankings.

In summary, just remember that your website navigation helps determine:

- How long visitors stay on your website
- Whether visitors convert (buy, read, sign up...)
- How many pages on your website are found and indexed in search engines

### **Internal Linking**

The internal link structure of your website simply refers to the way in which different pages on your website link to other internal pages. This creates a hierarchy which is a signal to search engines of the importance to assign to each page on your domain. When your website is crawled by a search engine, it will follow these links to discover new pages.

Without a proper internal linking structure, your product or pages may never be indexed, which severely reduce the number of visitors to those pages, along with the number of leads and sales.

*So how do you do it?*

Ensure that every page or blog post on your website links to other relevant pages on your site. Link to the most important pages from your main page, then narrow it down from there.

Blog posts should link to review pages or other helpful blog posts. Think about what other published information would supplement the information the user is currently reading. If that means linking out to a page on another website with an excellent article that backs up a point you're trying to make, feel free to link to that, too. This is called external linking, but it also plays a role in establishing trust with search engines. Just make sure you don't link to spammy or inappropriate websites.

The most important element of each link is what's called the anchor text, which is simply the clickable portion of a link. For example, if you see a link saying "Click here" then "Click here" is the anchor text. If you see a link that says "Buy it here" then "Buy it here" is the anchor text. If the link is an image or a button, then there is no anchor text.

Strategically using anchor text is one of the arts of proper SEO, as over-using a certain anchor text may risk your website being flagged for attempting to game the algorithm. On the other hand, under-using strategic anchor text will not yield the results you're hoping for.

Historically, the practice of using keyword-rich anchor text was popular and widespread in the SEO community, as it worked very well. The idea was to give the linked page more relevance for the keyword that was used in the anchor text. So instead of seeing "Click here", it was common to see "Buy these [blue cowboy boots](#) here" where the website owner was trying to get their page ranked well for the keyword "blue cowboy boots."

You can and should use keyword-rich anchor text sometimes, but only when it makes sense from a content flow and user standpoint to do so. Provide helpful value rather than attempting to manipulate the algorithm.

*Notice: Category Pages*

Category pages are often the pages that are linked to from your main navigation. Because of this, Google thinks that these are your most important pages. For that reason, you shouldn't include a privacy policy, employment opportunities, etc. in your main navigation. Instead, include them in your website's footer. Only include the biggest, most important pages in your main navigation.

## **Robots Text Files**

Your website's robots text file can put up a huge roadblock to ranking in search results if not set up correctly. If you aren't sure what you're doing and you try to create it or tinker with it yourself, you could end up blocking all search engines from ever finding some or all of your website.

Sure, there are some cases where you would want to stop search engines from discovering and indexing certain pages or categories. It's commonly good practice to do so for things like your cgi-bin.

However, this gets pretty technical; in my opinion, this is best left to someone who knows what they're doing. But it's important that you know about it, so you can bring the topic up with your designers, coders and SEO professional.

## ***File Names and Images***

Many people overlook how they're naming their files and their images. Whenever you place a file or image on your site, it should directly correlate with what the image is and what that page is about.

Image files are often named something generic like “img123.jpg.” This is sub-optimal, from an SEO perspective, because it tells you nothing about the image. If an image depicts a lion at the zoo, then an optimized image filename would be “lion-at-zoo.jpg.” This is helpful because search engines aren't able to “see” images and figure out what they are, so they rely on other signals for help.

The same thing often happens with URLs; let's consider an example. You may have seen URLs that look something like this:

<http://www.website.com/news/20xy1304fk>

The story might be about the hottest new restaurant in town. But by looking at that URL (the page's file name) you would never know that. Google, as well as other search engines, will favor the page if it's named insightfully. So in this case, a much better URL would be:

<http://www.website.com/news/new-restaurant-in-town>

Separate words with hyphens or underscores; just don't leave spaces between the words. When this happens, browsers fill in the empty space with “%20” which makes filenames look ugly and confusing.

What's important is to have a simple, descriptive URL that indicates what the page is about. In most cases, the title or headline of the page will make for an acceptable URL.

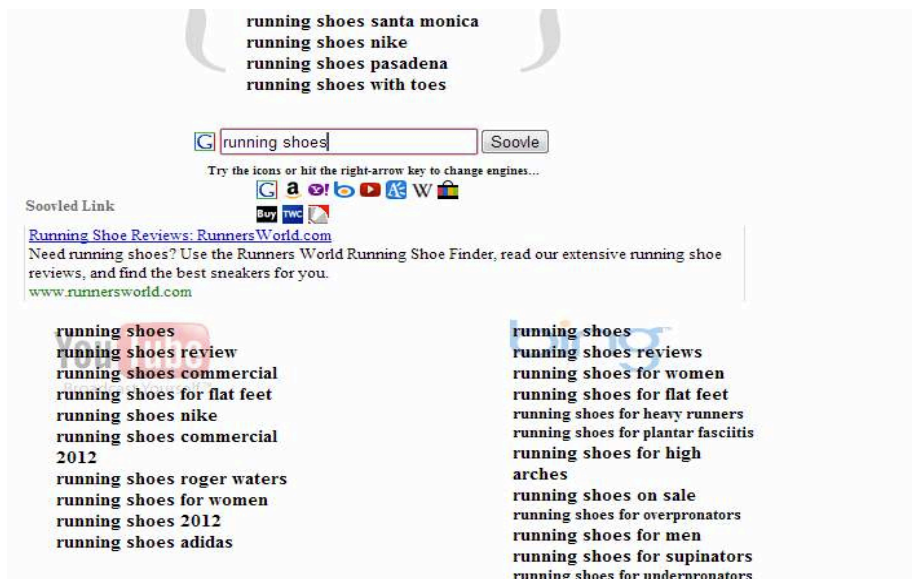
## ***Content Planning and Creation***

Content strategy is at the heart of SEO; it results in inbound links, social signals, and brand trust. But how do you know where to start? How do you create and publish content that will result in positive ROI?

To start, you need to have a good understanding of who your target market is, what they like, and what they tend to share. This will give you the insight you need to create the most effective and engaging content.

Begin by taking some time to look at what's working for your competitors. Take note of what your customers and target audience tend to share the most. What gets the most tweets, likes, and shares within your industry? Is it breaking news? How-to guides? Industry expertise? Simple little tips?

There are many tools that can help you come up with new ideas for your content planning. Two such sites are [Soovle](#) and [Ubersuggest](#). By simply inputting one keyword, you'll get variations of it that are being searched for across a number of other websites. Here's an example on Soovle where I input "running shoes" and you can see the different, but relevant terms that people search for:



It gives you many more ideas from more sites than shown; I had to crop the screenshot in order to make it readable for this guide ;)

### **Content Types & Planning**

Once you have some basic topic ideas, it's time to start planning. There are many different types of content that you can create, depending on what your goal is.

Here's a simple guide to some different types of content and what they're best used for. 3

#### **Best for entertainment:**

- Quizzes
- Games
- Branded videos

#### **Best used to educate:**

- Press releases
- Infographics

- Trend reports

***Best to inspire your audience:***

- Reviews
- Celebrity endorsements
- Community forums

***Best used to convince your audience of something:***

- Case studies
- Interactive demo's
- Webinars
- Checklists
- Product features
- Data sheets and price guides

***Good for both convincing and inspiring:***

- Special events
- Ratings

***Good for both entertainment & education:***

- Ebooks
- Articles

***Good for both convincing and education:***

- Demo videos
- White papers

As you can see, there are many types of content – blog posts are not the only option. Your goal should be to develop content that engages your audience while providing useful, helpful, or entertaining information. Aim to become the go-to resource for your industry and your brand, along with your audience, will bloom.

The easiest and most effective way to plan your content strategy is to use an editorial calendar. Plan when you're going to publish blog posts, videos, and white papers, and adhere to the schedule.

If you're using Wordpress, there's a wonderful plugin that makes this easy. Just search for "editorial calendar" on the 'add new' plugin page. Here's the URL to it:

<http://wordpress.org/extend/plugins/editorial-calendar>



If you aren't using Wordpress, then simply use a calendar or a spreadsheet.

## ***Important Factors for SEO-Friendly Pages***

Every page or post you create should offer something of value to the reader. It can be entertaining or informational, but it must fulfill a need. You can follow all of the content guidelines below, but if the content isn't useful to begin with, it isn't going to help. So, focus on identifying and solving a need first.

### ***Titles and Descriptions***

Title tags are part of the code in your page. It looks like this:

```
<title>My Page Title</title>
```

It's important that your title tag contain the main keyword on which you're focusing for that page. It should be relatively short (less than 70 characters is ideal), and readers should be able to get a good idea of what the page is about from the title. The title tag is arguably the most important single element of on-site SEO, and is also usually the clickable text in search engine results pages.

Next, focus on the meta description, which is often used for displaying the excerpt that shows up below the clickable link in the search results. It should be unique, and limited to 160 characters. If you don't define a meta description, search engines will usually display the first few lines of text from the body copy of your page. Don't let this happen, as it's a missed (and rare) opportunity to have some control over how your website is displayed in search engines.

Here's an example of how your meta description looks in the code of your webpage:

```
<meta name="description" content="Here is where the description  
of your page goes. Use keywords but don't over-do it. Keep it short  
and relevant.">
```

### ***Image Alt Text***

You should always include images and video when possible. It adds value and keeps readers around longer. When you use images, always use image alt text. Here's how you place it:

```

```

Search engine crawlers can't see or 'read' your image. The alt tag, along with the filename of the image, is your way of telling them what the image is. In addition, alt tags help visually-impaired people using audible browsers, and are an important part of keeping your code clean.

## **Headlines**

If your page is divided into several sections, use sub-headlines. Not only do they make content easier to read, they also let search engines know about different, related search terms for which your content should rank. You can create subheadlines by using the h1, h2 and h3 tags.

*Example:*

If, for example, your page is a guide on how to change a tire, sub-sections may cover areas such as “tools needed”, “safety tips,” and “helpful kits and supplies.” Your main page title should be in an h1 tag and the sub-sections encase in h2 tags. Here’s how it should look:

```
<h1>How to Change a Tire</h1>
```

```
Your content here....
```

```
<h2>Tools You'll Need</h2>
```

```
Your content here...
```

```
<h2>Safety Tips</h2>
```

```
Your content here...
```

```
<h2>Helpful Kits</h2>
```

```
Your content here
```

Lastly, remember our discussion about internal links? Don't forget them! Every page or post you publish on your website should link to other relevant pages on your website in a way that makes sense.

## **Mobile Compatibility**

Earlier, we discussed why it's important to have your website accessible to people using mobile devices. There are several ways this can be done.

### **Sub-directory**

One option is to create a sub-directory that has a mobile version of your website. Then, your website can be configured to display either your normal site or the mobile version, depending on what type of device on which the user is browsing.

### **Responsive Design**

Responsive design will display your content dynamically, meaning that it will adjust

itself depending on what device is being used to browse the web. No separate coding is needed for this solution; your design will fit and display well on all devices. This is what I recommend, as does Google. **4**

## **Content Marketing**

Now that your website is set up and you're publishing amazing content, it's time to start using it to generate more business; this is called content marketing. Content marketing accomplishes several things:

- Attracts inbound links to your website, strengthening your domain authority and improving your search engine rankings
- Adds to the wealth of content on your website, effectively dropping another “hook in the water” every time you publish a new page of content, which increases the likelihood of being found by potential customers in the search engines
- Establishes your brand as a thought-leader and industry authority, building trust with your readers and resulting in increased conversion rates, leads, and sales

Every link pointing to your website does more than just improve your search engine rankings; they can also become a free, long-term, passive source of highly targeted referral traffic– the best kind.

### ***Getting Started with Content Marketing***

Before you can get started with content marketing, you need a plan, and before you can create a plan you need to understand your audience. Here are a few things to ask yourself when beginning your content marketing strategy:

- Do you have true thought leaders that have original insights or opinions?
- Do you have unique research on new industry trends you can share?
- Do you have services or products unique to your industry?
- Who are you trying to reach through content marketing?
- What challenges are they trying to overcome?

### ***Frequency and Volume***

How dedicated are you going to be to content marketing? Some companies prefer to do a few in-depth, industry-leading white papers each year and focus all their efforts on them. Other companies will choose an ongoing flow of consistent content marketing in the form of videos, blog posts, infographics and more. The more the

merrier, so long as the quality of the content doesn't suffer.

### **Capabilities**

If you're going to focus on white papers, articles, blog posts and other types of content that are text-based, you'll need a strong writer on your team with subject matter expertise.

If you'd like to focus your effort on videos, do you have professional recording equipment or someone who can create professional animations?

If not, please realize that sub-par content will do you no good. It will reflect poorly on your company, and won't help you achieve the desired benefits outlined above.


### **The 3 C's of Content Marketing**

There are three big factors that you need to keep in mind while creating your content marketing plan. They've become known as the three C's of content marketing:

- Creativity
- Consistency
- Capturing

*Creativity:* Create content that's unique and memorable, and you'll receive more recognition. Be creative and leave room for flexibility. You never know when something might come up in the news you could put a spin on or a new trend might emerge. One of my favorite ways to be creative is to tie in popular holiday themes with content when those holidays are near.

*Consistency:* If you want your content marketing strategy to yield maximum benefit, it's important to be consistent. Whether you maintain 4 blog posts per month or 4 blog posts per week, stay consistent so customers and followers learn what they can expect.

***~60 percent of brands add fresh content at least weekly and the broad majority use up to 12 formats, suggesting that fast and steady and quality “wins the race”*** 

*Capturing:* I'm not sure why this term has been coined, as I would have called it 'optimization'. 'Capturing' simply refers to measuring and understanding information with regard to how well your content is performing. Measuring allows

you to track which efforts tend to drive the most traffic, and attract the most interest, leads, and sales. As you start to narrow down the best-performing content types, then you'll know where to focus for future content to achieve the best ROI.

### **Types of Content – Ideas**

There are two ways to look at 'types' content. One is the medium through which the content is published (ie, text, video, image, audio, etc.), and the other is the emotional reaction the content evokes in the reader. Here are a few examples:

Content can:



Think about what emotion you evoke in every piece of content that you create, along with what you want the reader to feel, and what action you want the reader to take. Content that makes a strong emotional connection will have a much better chance of going viral than content that doesn't.

# Summary & Getting Started Checklist

## Basic Site Setup

- Ensure there's a blog section for your site (if it isn't a blog)
- Offer a mobile-optimized site or version of your site
- Ensure your website designer is knowledgeable in SEO or bring in a professional they'll work with

## Advanced Site Setup Details

- Determine keywords you want to use for your website
- Develop an editorial calendar or equivalent
- Ensure each page/post links to other relevant pages
- Ensure each file name (URL) is short, relevant and keyword-rich
- Ensure images use descriptive alt tags and file names
- Ensure each page is given a unique, short, descriptive title and description
- Use h2 tags for sub-headlines

## Don't Put Content Marketing on the Backburner

- Create a content marketing plan & calendar

# Helpful Tools & Plugins

## WordPress Plugins:

[Wordpress SEO by Yoast](#) – All in one SEO plugin

[Twitter Facebook Social Share](#) – Social network sharing buttons

[Editorial Calendar](#) – Easily integrate calendar into the admin area

[SEO Friendly Images](#) – Helps you set up your images for SEO

[Google XML Sitemaps](#) – Builds your sitemap so Google can read your website easier

[Broken Links](#) – Helps avoid broken links

[SEO Smart Links](#) – Helps you set up internal links

[Inbound Writer](#) - Helps you find potential topics and keywords that revolve around what's being searched for right now

[WP Robots Txt](#) – Allows you to edit your robots.txt file from the Wordpress admin

[WP Google Analytics](#) – Lets you use Google Analytics to track your site statistics

**Keyword research and content topic research:**

[Soovle.com](http://Soovle.com) – Get ideas for keywords and content

[Ubersuggest.org](http://Ubersuggest.org) – Get ideas for keywords and content

[Google Keyword Tool](https://www.google.com/keywordtool/) – Great place to start for basic keyword research

[Google Trends](https://trends.google.com/trends/) – Compare similar keywords for search volume and seasonal trends

[Open Site Explorer](https://www.opensiteexplorer.org/) – Discover competitors' inbound links

**Other:**

[SEOptimizer](https://www.seooptimizer.com/) – Very simple SEO audit of your website

Tools like SEOptimizer can be helpful to get a very basic idea of your website's optimization level, along with a quick overview of any easy-to-fix problems. For instance, they'll usually give you a warning or caution (or suggestion) if you aren't using h1, h2 and h3 tags. But there's much more to a professional SEO audit than what these tools will normally tell you. Ask an SEO professional if your website needs a full, professional audit.



# Social Media Marketing

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Now that you have a good understanding of the basics of SEO, website structure and design, let's discuss the rising star of the online marketing world: Social media.

There are many social media sites, including the ones you likely already know about: Facebook, Twitter, and Google+. Before you start creating content for your content marketing strategy to syndicate across social media channels, you should identify which social media channels will be most appropriate for your product or service.

For example, consider Pinterest, on which the demographics are mostly women. Half of them are moms. If your business is in tailor-made tuxedos and sports jackets, Pinterest probably doesn't contain the right demographic for you.

Sure, there's always a way to make it work, if you plan your strategy just right. Women might fall all over your amazing threads and order for their husbands, sons, dads, brothers and friends. But you'd probably have to get lucky for that to happen.

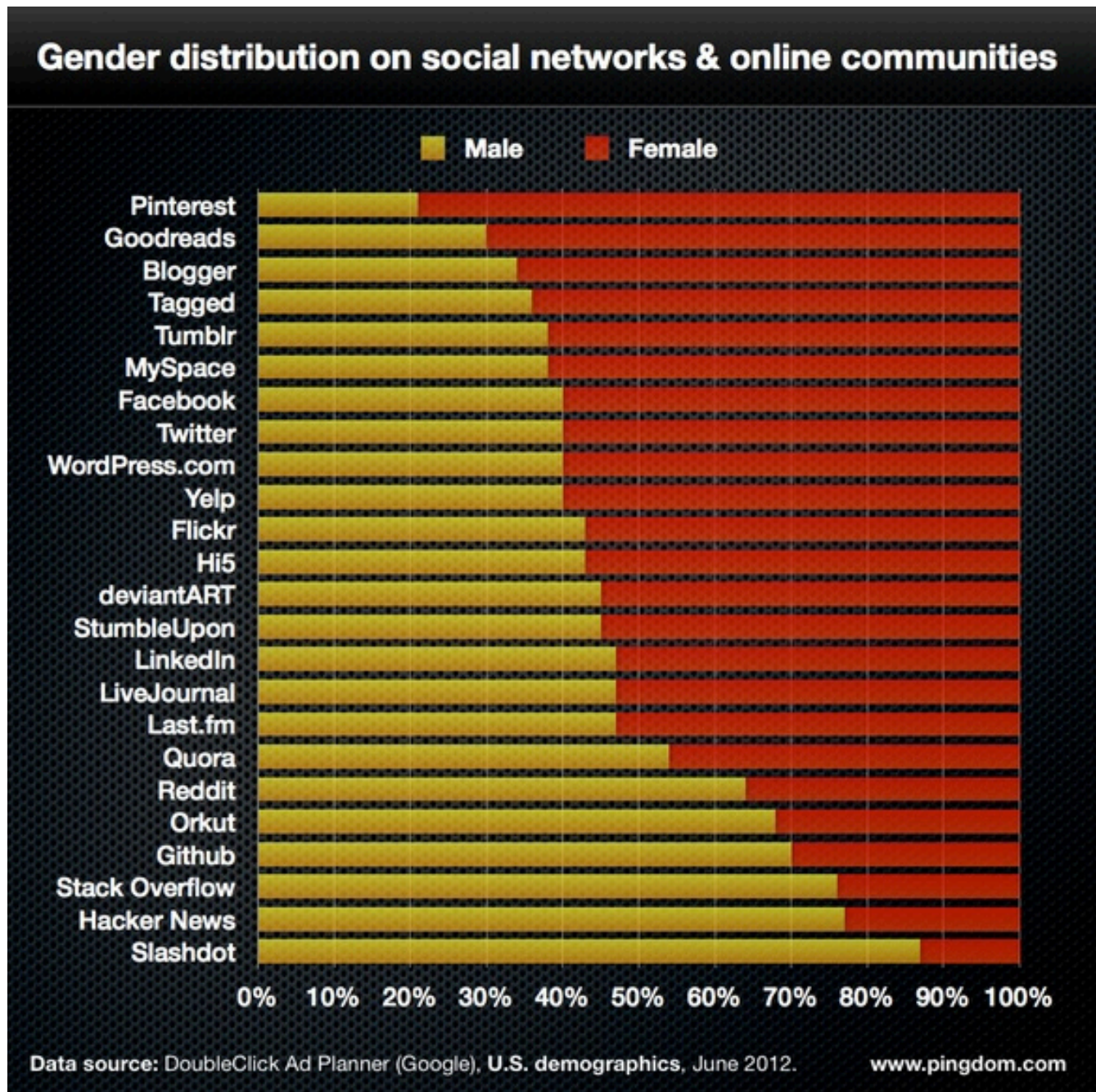
A better option might be to find a social network that fits your demographic. Did you know there's a site very similar to Pinterest that is growing quickly? It's called Gentlemint, and this one caters to men. This might be a much better social network on which to focus your image content marketing efforts.

So, start by selecting a few appropriate social media sites. Almost all businesses should have a Facebook and Twitter account, but don't forget about Google+, Youtube, Pinterest, and LinkedIn (especially if you're a B2B business).

Grow and develop those first, then you can start including others. Don't overdo it, either; you should have the resources in place to manage the accounts. Social profiles for your business that aren't fully set up, don't interact and engage, or just sit idly can reflect poorly on your business.

If you truly don't have the time or budget for some solid demographic research, then at least try to get feedback from your current customers as to which social media sites they often use.

## A Look at Genders on Major Social Sites:



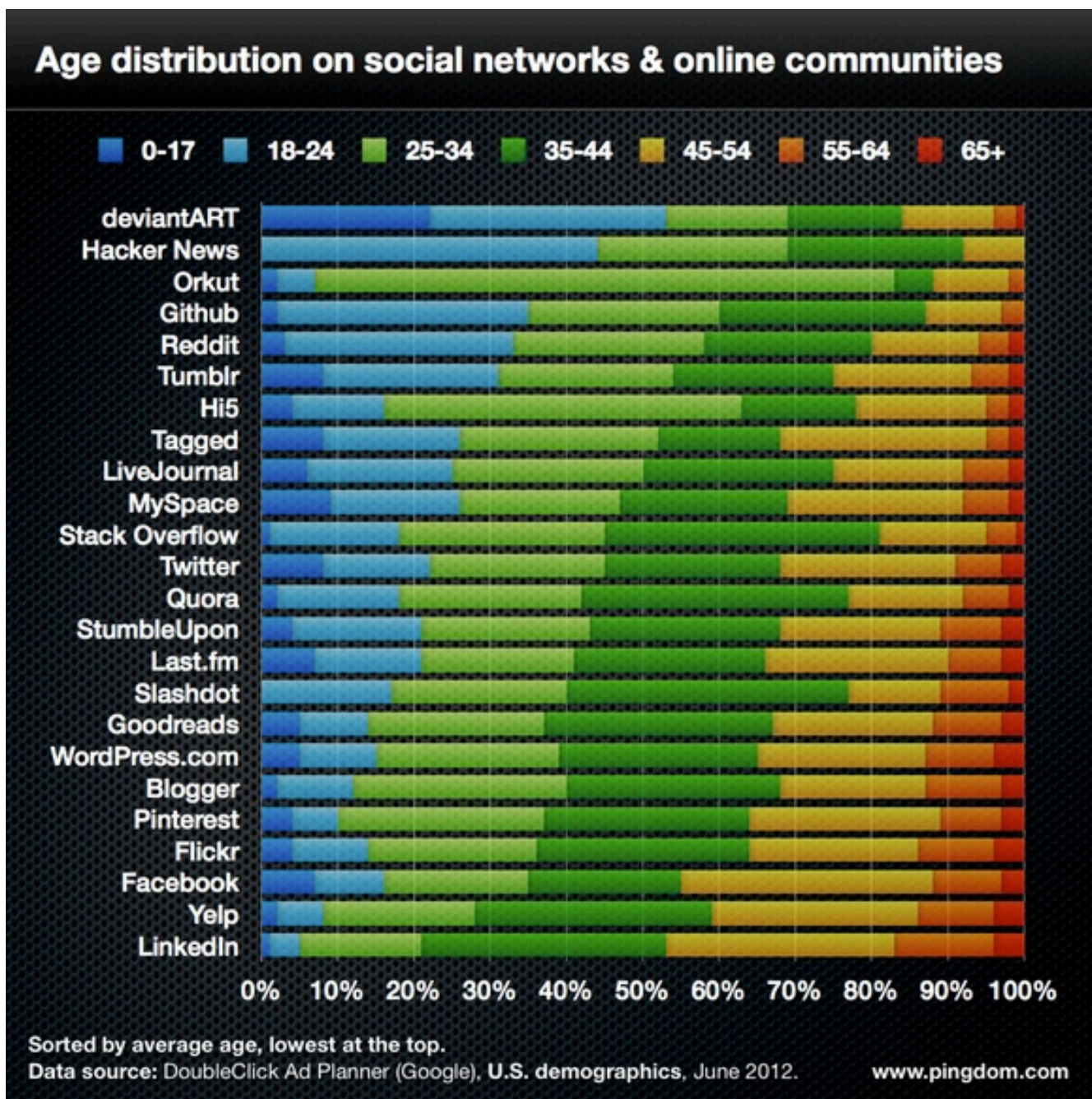
Obviously, if your product/service caters to women, then Pinterest should be on your radar.

If it's more geared towards men, then maybe Reddit or Quora are better suited for you (The last ones on the list are more towards computer and internet themes).



What about demographics by age? Is there a certain age group that would be more interested in what you have to offer?

*A Look at Age Groups on Major Social Sites:*



There are many more sites that can be grouped by income, education, how likely they are to share video, and much more. Take your time and use this information to select the most appropriate ones to begin with.

## ***Setting Up Social Media Sites & Integrating Them***

After you've chosen which sites you're going to use, you need to create accounts on them. One of the first things you should do is go to [Knowem.com](http://Knowem.com) and input a username you'd like to use on your social profiles. Ideally, this should be your brand or company name. Knowem will then search over 500 different social sites, checking if that username is available on each one. Why is this important?

Well, you don't want to become known as StevesAutoRepair on several sites, only to have to use AutoRepairBySteve on others. A consistent username helps you achieve brand consistency, so that you're easily recognizable and findable.

### ***Get Social on Your Website***

The goal should be for your readers, fans and customers to be able to easily share your content, and interact with you in social media. To achieve this, include social “follow us” icons to allow your visitors to easily connect with your brand. Ideally, these icons should be displayed on every page of your website, and they are commonly found in the upper right sidebar or header.

Additionally, include “share” buttons on your blog posts to allow readers to easily and instantly share your content with others.

### ***Create a Brand Strategy and ERT (Emergency Response Team)***

No company is 100% safe from being attacked in social media channels, so prepare for it before it happens. Whether it's a customer complaint or someone making false claims about your company, there should be a plan for how to handle it. Who will be the voice for your company? Make sure they understand how to handle such situations professionally. Poor, unprofessional responses in social media can lead to huge damage to your brand image.

### ***Industry Research***

Before interacting in social media, do your homework. What do I mean by that? Find some authority figures in your industry on the social sites you're going to use. Who are the influencers in your industry? Who has the most reach? Who are the thought leaders?

Here are a few free tools to help you figure out the answers to these questions:

[WeFollow.com](http://WeFollow.com) – Allows you to search for industry influencers by keyword

[TweetReach](http://TweetReach) – Enter a Twitter name, URL or hashtag and get information about their reach on Twitter

[SocialMention](http://SocialMention) – Get regular updates when a person, company or topic is mentioned

Ok, so why are you gathering this information? Using tools like the ones above can help you get off the ground with your strategy. By monitoring what they do, when they do it, and what gets the most response or attention, you'll be able to model some of your social media action plan after their example. Obviously what they're doing is working!

### ***Inbound links from social media marketing***

Remember our discussion about backlinks and how they're essentially 'votes' for your website? Social media marketing does result in inbound links, and yes, many of those are included in the 'social signals' we covered. For example, every time a tweet contains a link to your website, that's an inbound link and also a social signal. Similarly, when someone shares one of your blog posts on Facebook with a link back to the post, that's an inbound link and a social signal.

Take a break. Grab some coffee. When you're ready, let's take a closer look at the most important single element in your website's search engine rankings: Inbound links, and how to get them.

# Link Building

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Prior to April 2012, inbound links were the overwhelmingly majority factor in how well websites ranked in the search engines, especially for Google. It was pretty easy for online marketers to rank websites by building thousands of links to them, regardless of their quality or relevance. The on-site content didn't even need to be good, nor was it important to have to have a large social following. SEO strategies basically boiled down to building as many links as possible with the anchor text for the keywords for which webmasters wanted to rank.

In April 2012, Google released its 'Penguin' algorithm update, which put an end to this reality. Around that time, many marketers and webmasters were hit over the head with a variety of algorithm updates designed by Google to stop the manipulation of its search results by spammy, scalable link building tactics.

But that doesn't mean link building is dead. Even with the fallout of the Penguin algorithm update, inbound links are still the single most important factor in the algorithm in determining search engine rankings.

What changed were the tactics and strategies necessary to build strong, credible links that have a positive benefit on rankings. While tactics and strategies vary, all you need to know is that you should aim for achieving links from relevant, quality websites. How do you know if a website is considered "quality?" Well, for example, you don't want backlinks from websites:

- That have no or very little content
- That have copied, spun or poorly written content
- That have tons of links (talking hundreds and thousands) to other websites. These are often viewed as link farms.
- That link to taboo or unrelated websites (porn, gambling, etc...)

## **What you do want?**

- Links from lots of completely different websites on different IP addresses
- Links that are slowly built up, naturally, as your content deserves
- Links from websites relevant or vertical to your industry
- Links from large, authority websites full of quality content
- Links with a wide range of anchor text
- Contextual, in-content links



The trick is to balance everything above. Here are some specific link building tactics that are completely ethical and effective.

## **Guest Blogging**

Guest blogging has been one of the best forms of link building for years. Some people are worried that guest blogging is going to be the next 'slap' from Google, but I don't agree.

Mass producing low-quality articles that are published on mediocre blogs created solely for the purpose of providing links? Yes, Google probably will put an end to the effectiveness of this. But that's not true guest blogging.

True guest blogging is not only beneficial for both the publisher and the author, but the readers too. If you take the time to do guest blogging correctly, you can expect some positive reinforcement from Google. You'll also earn passive, targeted, free website referral traffic for years to come. So how do you do it?

**Step 1.** First, you need to find blogs and publishers that have an audience and following that would be interested in your product/service. For example, let's say your business sells lawn mowers. Sure, websites related to lawn mowers would be great. But you have to think vertically, horizontally and every other way but straight forward.

A homeowners' blog might be a good fit; wouldn't homeowners be interested in purchasing a lawn mower? Your guest blog post could be "6 Reasons Your Lawn Looks Like Crap" – gasp. That's okay. It gets your attention, right? Most homeowners are very proud of their land and their lawn. They will likely want to know!

Think about the categories of publishers that would fit with your audience. Home & Garden, Home Improvement, and even Real Estate might be good fits. After all, in order to make the sale, that real estate agent is going to need the lawn looking spiffy.

**Step 2.** Go to Google and start searching for blogs related to these categories. You could try searching for "home improvement blog" as a good starting point. The search results will likely be a mix of actual home improvement blogs, and lists of the top home improvement blogs. Visit all of these and make a list of the ones you think would be most appropriate.

**Step 3.** Find the contact information for each blog. You can usually do this by visiting the "contact us" page on the blog, or by doing a "Whois" lookup on



the domain to view the domain registry information. To perform a “Whois” lookup, simply visit Google and search for “whois lookup” and you’ll find plenty of websites that will facilitate the process for you.

**Step 4.** Contact each blog owner and politely introduce yourself, explain why you’re reaching out, and request the opportunity to contribute to their blog as a guest contributor.

Here’s a sample email template you can use for this process:

*Subject:* you should blog about [insert your guest blog post topic]

[insert their first name], as an avid reader of [insert their site name], I would love to read about [insert guest blog post topic], and I think your other readers would as well.

Your articles on [insert existing post from their website #1, insert existing post from their website #2, and insert existing post from their website #3] are great, but I think you can tie it all together by blogging on [insert guest blog post topic].

I know you are probably busy and won’t have time to write about it, so I’m going to make you an offer you can’t refuse. ;) How about I write it for you? Don’t worry, I’m a great blogger and have had my posts featured on [insert previous guest post URL #1] and [insert previous guest post URL #2].

Let me know if you are interested! I already know your blogging style, plus I understand what your readers love... as I am one. ;)

Look forward to hearing from you,  
[insert your name]

**Pro Tip:** When sending out these emails, I highly recommend you download and install [Boomerang for Gmail](#), which is a handy plugin that allows you to automatically schedule follow-up reminders if you don’t hear back from someone. This will help to ensure that your message doesn’t fall through the cracks.

**Step 5.** Hopefully, you’ll get some positive replies from website owners or editors. When you do, start writing a super-awesome, insightful, helpful article. Once you’re finished and proud of it, send it to the publisher for review and approval.

Depending on the publisher, they will allow you to include a link to your

website in your author bio (sometimes called a resource box) either at the end or beginning of the article. It's also usually acceptable to link to your website from the body of your article if it's contextually relevant and useful, which is ideal, as this type of link carries more weight than an author bio link.

### ***Link Building that Makes the World a Better Place***

This process results in publishers getting enticing, helpful content for their readers that engages them and grabs their curiosity. In return, you get a link from a credible, authoritative publisher in your industry or niche, resulting in improved search engine rankings and hands-free referral traffic in the future. Readers learn something new and find a helpful resource for more information. Everyone wins! There's no reason that Google should ever have a problem with this. In fact, Google and Bing have specifically stated this is an acceptable form of link building.

From a May 12, 2012 interview summary published by [Search Engine Land](#) with Google's Matt Cutts and Duane Forrester of Bing:

*“[Forrester] suggested contacting an authority site in your space to see if they would publish a guest article that you write particularly for them. If the authority site finds your content valuable enough to publish, that's [what we look for].”*

## **Press Releases**

Press releases yield many benefits for businesses:

- Inbound links
- Increased brand awareness
- Media exposure
- Positive branding
- Social media buzz
- Referral traffic to your website

Some marketers try to abuse press release distribution as a link building tactic. Years ago, press releases had the power to improve rankings quickly and easily. Today, it's still debated whether links from press releases yield value from a search engine ranking perspective.

Matt Cutts recently commented in a forum discussion that people shouldn't expect links from press releases to help with rankings. Shortly thereafter, several case

studies were released by independent bloggers that suggested Cutts was wrong. In the end, it just doesn't really matter whether he's right or not; press releases yield benefits in many ways other than just inbound links.

A well-written press release that announces something interesting and news-worthy can do wonders. If interesting enough, it could even get picked up by mainstream media and news publishers. This citations, inbound links, and social buzz this would generate could be golden for your business.

Unfortunately, writing a great press release requires talent and skill. Here are the elements of a great press release:

- Proper formatting
- It must actually be newsworthy (yes, you CAN find something newsworthy in your business... a new product, a new employee, a new breakroom, a special offer you're running)
- It needs to grab the reader's attention and inspire them to take an action. What do you want this action to be? To visit your website? To visit your Facebook page for a special offer? This is up to you. What's the main purpose of your PR?
- Be up to date with current news and try to put a local spin on something that's in the headlines
- Don't blatantly promote. Instead, tell a story in some way or offer help. Remember you get what you give... so give!
- Use a strong headline and opening paragraph or you risk losing the reader's interest

There are many press release sites, but I recommend two:

- [PRWeb](#) (Select the \$200 *Advanced* distribution option for maximum effect)
- [PRLeap](#)

## **HARO**

[HARO](#) (Help A Reporter Out) is a not-so-known goodie which can give you the opportunity to connect with major publishers, magazines, and even TV shows.

After creating an account, you will receive (as per your preferences) email alerts when there's a need for a source or interviewee in a particular field or industry.

When reporters need an opinion or quote from an industry expert on a story they're

writing, they put out a notice on HARO. If you see an opportunity that fits your business, experience, or expertise, you can reach out to the reporter.

If the reporter decides to work with you, you'll get mentioned or credited for contributing to the story. This results in inbound links, media exposure, referral traffic, and brand awareness.

Here are a few other services similar to HARO; I haven't used these, but they appear to offer the same thing:

<http://www.reporterconnection.com/>

<http://www.mediakitty.com>

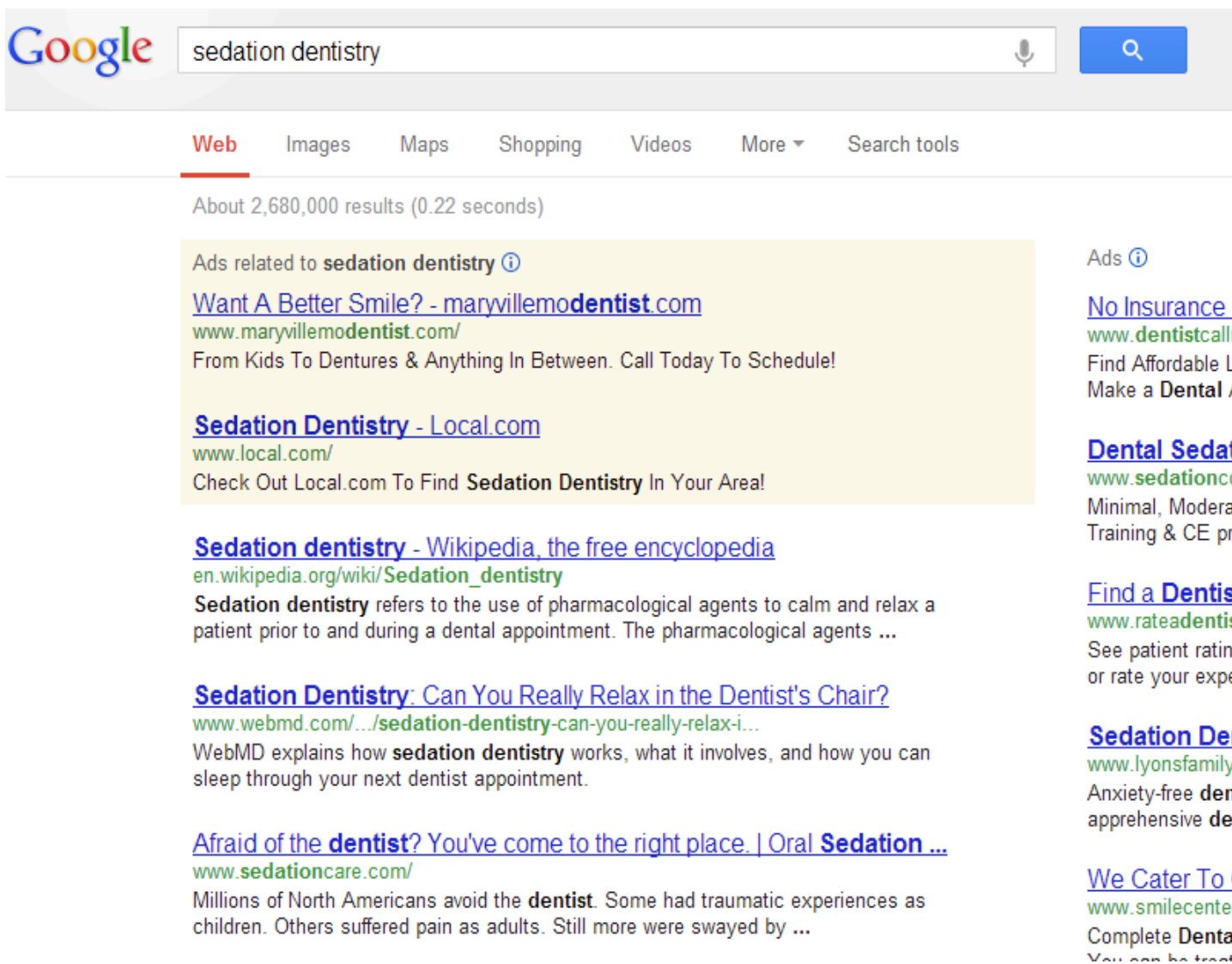
<http://www.prnewswire.com/profnet/>

<http://www.sourcebottle.com.au>

# Local SEO

If your business services a local area with a physical (brick and mortar) address, then you'll need to understand local SEO and how it's unique from national SEO.

Local SEO is different from national SEO; search engines even display search results differently based on whether they consider the query to be local or not. Here's a screen shot of regular search results, followed by one that shows local search results.



Regular search results



kansas city sedation dentistry



Web Images Maps Shopping More Search tools

About 138,000 results (0.36 seconds)

Ads related to **kansas city sedation dentistry**

**KC Sedation Dentistry - Sedation Experts Serving All KC**

[www.mingosandassociates.com/](http://www.mingosandassociates.com/)

Free Consultation & X-Ray! Call now

1 Map of 4746 Belleview Avenue, Kansas City, MO  
(816) 531-8740 - Directions

**KC Sedation Dentistry - 30 years of sedation expertise**

[www.dentalartskc.com/](http://www.dentalartskc.com/)

View the Special Offer on website!

**Dentist in Shawnee Kansas - mydentistinc.com**

[www.mydentistinc.com](http://www.mydentistinc.com) › Find by Zip Code › Office Locations

Most Recommended Dentist in Kansas Get Free New Patient Exam Call Now!

2 Map of 7450 Quivira Road, Shawnee Mission, KS  
(913) 396-9510 - Directions

**sedation dentist Kansas City - Shawnee Sedation Dentistry**

[www.shawneesedationdentist.com/kansas-city-sedation-dentistr...](http://www.shawneesedationdentist.com/kansas-city-sedation-dentistr...)

Sedation Dentist in the Kansas City Area - Call Today (877) 371-5180 for quality Sedation Dentistry in the Kansas City, Lenexa, Olathe, Mission and Shawnee ...

**Sedation Dentistry - Dental Implants Kansas City**

[www.kansascityimplantdentist.com/sedation/](http://www.kansascityimplantdentist.com/sedation/)

We provide high-quality sedation dentistry in Kansas, Missouri that helps patients determine the best method for them in preparation for treatment.

**Kansas City, MO Dentist**

[www.kcsedationdentist.com/](http://www.kcsedationdentist.com/)

Google+ page

**Dr. John Gordon**

[drjohngordon.com/](http://drjohngordon.com/)

Score: 30 / 30 - 15 Google reviews

**Northland Dental Associates: Mancin Mark...**

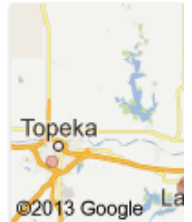
[www.kansascitycosmeticdental.com/](http://www.kansascitycosmeticdental.com/)

1 Google review

A 13643-A Holmes Rd  
Kansas City  
(816) 941-7788

B 5844 NW Barry Rd #220  
Kansas City  
(816) 505-2222

C 7229 N Oak Trafficway  
Kansas City  
(816) 436-2760



Map for kar

Ads

**Michael C. J**

[www.byarsden.com](http://www.byarsden.com)

General, Fami  
Dentistry Per

**Sedation D**

[www.appletree.com](http://www.appletree.com)

Achieve Peac  
Improving You

**Sedation D**

[www.kidsfunsi.com](http://www.kidsfunsi.com)

Overland Park  
Dentistry. Cal

3 6500 W. 9  
Directions

**Olathe Den**

[www.smilema.com](http://www.smilema.com)

Comprehensiv  
Schedule an a

**Shawnee D**

[www.burrowfa.com](http://www.burrowfa.com)

Burrow Family  
Call to set up



Local search results

Notice how the results from the second screenshot, with the arrows, have the address displayed to the right. There are also links to either their website or their Google+ page. These are the local search results for this keyword.

Local search results are usually triggered when a geographic region is included in the search query. Notice how “Kansas city” was included in the search query that resulted in local search results.

## ***Local SEO Tactics***

With local SEO, there are a few more ranking factors that are taken into consideration as compared to national SEO. Read on for specific tactics to optimize your website for local search results.

### ***Start with on-site SEO***

To get your website ranking well for local search results, start by ensuring that all the basics of proper on-site SEO are implemented. Place your business name, address, and phone number in the footer of your website, so that it displays on every page. Ensure your local region is present in the title tag and meta description tag of your website’s header code.

### ***Claim Your Google+ Local Page***

Next, claim your Google+ Local page. Even if you've never created one, there is probably one already one half empty, dead, waiting to be claimed and making potential customers turn the other way when they see it. To claim your Google+ page, login to Google+ ([plus.google.com](https://plus.google.com)) and click the “Local” tab on the left sidebar. Search for your business name and see if you can find it. If so, look for a button that says something to the effect of “Claim this listing.”

If you can’t find it, then you’ll need to create your listing from scratch. To do this, visit [Google.com/places](https://Google.com/places) and follow the instructions.

Once you’ve claimed your listing, fill out all the details, add images, video, and make it as thorough as possible. Robust, complete listings will receive preference in local search results.

### ***Claim Your Listings on Other Local Directories***

You’ll need to claim or create your local business listings on other local directories as well. Yelp is the most popular, so let’s take a look at a great example of a completed Yelp profile:



**The Capital Grille**  
 ★★★★★ 92 reviews Rating Details  
 Category: Steakhouses [Edit]  
 4740 Jefferson St  
 Kansas City, MO 64112  
 Neighborhoods: The Plaza, Country Club  
 (816) 531-8345  
<https://www.thecapitalgrille.com/>  
 Explore the menu  
 Make a Reservation  
 Date & Time: 01/29/2013 1:00 am Party Size: 2 Find a Table  
 \$18 for New Weekday Lunch Specials!  
 Join us weekdays for lunch and enjoy our new "Plates" menu - choose a soup, sandwich & side - all for \$18 and served at the speed of lunch!  
 Hours: Mon-Fri 11 am - 2:30 pm, Mon-Thu 5 pm - 10 pm, Fri-Sat 5 pm - 11 pm, Sun 5 pm - 9 pm  
 Good for Groups: Yes, Accepts Credit Cards: Yes, Parking: Valet, Garage, Attire: Dressy  
 Price Range: \$\$\$\$ Good for Kids: No, Takes Reservations: Yes, Delivery: No, Take-out: Yes, Waiter Service: Yes, Outdoor Seating: No, Wi-Fi: No  
 Good For: Dinner, Alcohol: Full Bar, Noise Level: Loud, Ambience: Classy, Upscale, Has TV: No, Caters: Yes, Wheelchair Accessible: Yes  
 Edit Business Info, First to Review Tom P.  
 Send to Friend, Bookmark, Send to Phone, Write a Review  
 Reviews (92), About This Business  
 About This Business Provided by business  
 Specialties  
 New "Plates" Lunch Offering for \$18  
 Customize your lunch with a choice of sandwich, salad and side for \$18. Exceptional cuisine & attentive service, all at the speed of lunch.

*Well-done Yelp business listing*

For an up-to-date list of all the other directories on which you should claim your local business listing, visit <http://www.yext.com/products.html>.

While you're at it, I highly recommend the Yext service. It will automatically claim or create your local business listing at each of the directories on that list, and synchronize them so you can change or update them all instantly from a single, central dashboard.

### ***Get Citations, Lots of Them***

Citations are mentions of your business NAP (name, address, phone number) on other websites. They are like inbound links, but for local SEO (they have no effect on national SEO rankings). For maximum effect, a citation should be an exact match for how everything is listed on your Google+ Local page. And I mean *exactly*, down to how the area code in your phone is displayed (dashes or parentheses?).

Yext is the best and easiest way to get these citations initially. After you complete the Yext listings, get new citations from other sources on an ongoing basis. I recommend the White Spark local citation finder tool for ongoing citation building. You can check it out here: <https://www.whitespark.ca/local-citation-finder>

### ***Get Reviews on your Google+ Local Page***

Continually work at getting customer reviews on your Google+ Local page. The more positive reviews you get, the better your local search results will be.

# Using Images to Drive Traffic to Your Site

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## ***Image Search***

People love images and video; especially online where people tend to skim and browse instead of read word by word or sentence by sentence. That's why it's often worth taking the time to optimize for image search traffic to your website. Optimization is simple, but the quality of image search traffic varies greatly depending on your business or industry.

Optimization mostly consists of using strategic (ie, keyword-themed) image file names, alt text, and captions. Some websites actually get a lot of traffic from Google's image search. There are two potential problems here, though.

### *Dilemma #1*

When searchers find your image in Google search, they're shown your image in a popup box. But they won't actually land on your page unless they click the link to see the full website for that image (your page). Generally, after finding your image, most users will screenshot or copy it from that Google popup box without needing to actually visit your website.

### *Dilemma #2*

The second dilemma is that image searchers tend to be browsers; not buyers. You may get an uptick in traffic, but that may not result in more leads or sales.

But if you have a website that revolves around visuals, it could be well worth it. A photography studio? An artist? A celebrity fan site? Style site? A store?

## ***Infographics***

Remember why images are so effective? Because online users tend to have short attention spans when it comes to consuming content, and images are easy to digest quickly. If you can present original findings, insights, or data in an easy-to-understand way visually, it's much more likely to be shared, referenced, and discussed. And in the world of online marketing, that's the difference between companies that win and lose.

## Reasons to invest in infographics:

- They are often quickly shared and spread across the internet
- They spark social media sharing (social signals) and discussion
- They generate brand awareness, referral traffic, and inbound links

Infographics allow you to reach more people and present your information in a simple, effective way. But not just anyone can create an infographic; if it isn't done professionally, it could end up being a worthless investment. The design, script, and data representation of the infographic are the keys to its virality. There are infographic design & promotion services available for businesses that don't have the resources to create infographics in-house.

With the rise and popularity of infographics, many websites have emerged that let users design their own custom infographics. Here are some of them to check out:

<http://www.icharts.net>

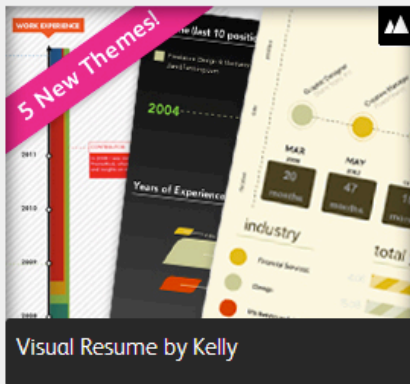
<https://venngage.com>

<http://infogr.am>

<http://create.visual.ly>

<http://www.easel.ly>

<http://piktochart.com>



# Staying Safe from Search Engine Algorithm Changes

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In the online marketing world, things change constantly. SEO professionals have to be on their toes 24/7, always watching, listening, reading, and preparing for potential changes that could occur.

The past couple years have been a roller coaster ride for SEO professionals. Some were ready for the algorithm changes that occurred over that timespan which changed the industry, while many were completely caught off guard.

Don't let that happen to you. Make time to keep up with changes in the industry, or hire someone who specializes in it. Here's a glimpse into some of the recent changes unleashed by Google over the course of 2011 and 2012.

## **Google Panda**

Google's "Panda" algorithm update targeted sites with low quality on-site content; even huge sites with thousands of pages that long enjoyed top rankings were severely affected.

Business sites weren't exempt, either. In fact, there was one furniture store that offered a \$25,000 reward for anyone who could recover their site's rankings and traffic to their pre-Panda levels.

Since Panda's original launch in February of 2011, there have been numerous updates to the algorithm. The 24<sup>th</sup> official Panda algorithm update was launched on January 22<sup>nd</sup> of 2013, which is the most recent as of the writing of this book. You can track Google's algorithm update history at SEOMoz here:

<http://www.seomoz.org/google-algorithm-change>

## **How to Avoid the Panda Algorithm**

Google doesn't give definite answers very often; as a result, much of what an SEO professional does is research and testing. This is the only way to get real answers. With that said, here are some tips that will help you stay out of Panda's way:

- Avoid duplicate content (ie, textual content that is exactly the same on one page of your website as another page on your website).
- Avoid thin content (ie, content that is incomplete, too brief, or otherwise not useful or valuable to readers).
- Include original, unique, valuable content on every page of your website.
- Limit advertisements on your website, especially if they are located “above the fold” of the page or not very relevant to the content of the page.
- Don't unnaturally stuff keywords into your page content.
- Publish interactive, engaging content to keep visitors on your website longer.
- Use attention-grabbing, but truthful and succinct meta descriptions
- Get lots of real social signals by engaging and interacting in social media
- Get high quality inbound links from other websites

## **Google Penguin**

While Panda focused more on on-site factors and content, the Penguin algorithm was designed to look for unnatural manipulation of search engine rankings occurring off-site.

This algorithm was released in April of 2012, and significantly affected hundreds of thousands of websites. Remember earlier when I discussed how inbound links used to play a much greater role in search engine rankings? This fact was abused and manipulated to the point that Google had to figure out a way to fix it. Penguin was Google's answer that tried to fix it.

### **How to Avoid the Penguin Algorithm:**

- Don't purchase links from other websites. Earn them.
- Don't participate in link exchanges. This is when you and another website agree to link to each other.
- Don't use social comments, blog comments and forum posts purely for linking purposes. On the same token, don't be afraid of them either. Simply use them for what they're meant to be... social interaction and networking.
- Don't hire an SEO company that promises to build hundreds or thousands of inbound links.
- Avoid over-optimization of anchor text. Any more than 2% of your inbound links having the same anchor text, especially if that anchor text happens to be a high-value keyword, is a red flag to Google of unnatural anchor text manipulation.



- Think quality, not quantity, when it comes to link building.

## **Google's Freshness Update**

The freshness update was released in November of 2011. This was simply Google's way of trying to give users timelier search results. For example, if you were to search Google for “flu type”, you probably don't want a history lesson published in 1986 on the types of flu that we knew about. Instead, you're probably looking for news on the new flu type that's spreading across America or looking for symptoms to identify which type you may have

What does this mean for you? Post on your website often! Most business owners achieve this with a blog. This is just one of the reasons that I always recommend including a blog on your site, so you can easily update it and keep your site running with fresh content.

Here are some of the benefits of fresh content published to your blog:

- Improves conversion rate because your users see that the website is active (and, therefore, so is the business). Also helps to establish authority and expertise in the niche, further increasing conversion rate.
- Helps generate social signals when readers decide to share articles via Twitter or Facebook.
- Allows you to rank for more keywords relevant to your niche. Every blog post is like dropping another hook in the water, giving you more opportunities to rank for user queries that are looking for your services.
- Helps generate inbound links from other publishers looking for relevant articles to cite, which improves your rankings, generates brand awareness, and drives inbound leads.

## **Top Heavy (“Above the Fold”) Update**

Originally launched in January of 2012, this update affected websites that had too many advertisements high on the page. “Advertisements” included opt-in boxes, PPC ads, subscribe boxes, and other commercially-oriented items that distracted from the editorial content of the page.

Google's goal is simple: They want users to easily find the content they were looking for when they clicked your search result. So, make sure your content is the primary

thing users see on your site.

## Conclusion

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I hope you've found this information helpful, and given you the tools and knowledge necessary to optimize your website, design a strategic online marketing campaign, and grow your business' presence online. If you need help or would like to discuss how my business (AudienceBloom) can help, you can always contact me at <http://www.AudienceBloom.com>

I wish you and your business the best!

Cheers,

*Jayson DeMers*

# Citations & Resources

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