

Your SEO Strategy?
**7 DAYS TO COME
UP WITH A PLAN**
to Boost Your Rankings



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Why You Need A Solid SEO Strategy And A Way To Measure Results

Trying to get traffic to your website without a solid plan is a bit like driving around with a vague destination in mind, but no directions on how to get there. You may eventually make your way to where you want to be, but it will take a lot longer and require more effort than if you had your route mapped out.

The same holds true with website traffic in general, and search engine optimization in particular. With a solid strategy, you will have a goal in mind, and a plan for what to do to get there. Even if you're new to SEO and you don't quite understand what it will take to get a certain keyword ranking, or even what a realistic keyword goal is for you, it's good to have a plan. You can always tweak and adjust both your plan and your strategy as you go along.

When you have a workable strategy with defined goals, and a way to track the results you are getting over time, it becomes easy to determine if your strategy is working. Without either of those, you're guessing at best, and that's not a good business practice. Search engine optimization takes time and effort. And if you're hiring someone to help you, it can involve quite a bit of money.

So where do you start? Learn the basics of how SEO works. Set up a good Website Analytics program so you can start to measure what traffic you're getting now and where new traffic is coming from. Google Analytics is a great program that will grow with you. Install it, look through the reports, start to learn to use it and expand your knowledge as you go along.

Your next step will be to formulate a strategy. This should be a five-step process that includes:

1. Determine your ideal target audience.
2. Figure out what they are looking for and what keywords and key phrases they use.
3. Generate high-value content around those terms.
4. Implement on page and on site optimization.
5. Track results and adjust as needed.

From there you can expand on what's working, identify more audiences, more terms, and create more content, and slow down on what isn't working. One important thing to keep in mind is that search engine optimization takes time and that you're building your site's reputation with the big search engines over time. Don't give up on your strategy too soon and whatever you do, don't throw in the towel.

Keywords - A Glimpse Into What Your Target Audience Wants And Needs

Let's talk about keywords. These are the words your target audience types into their favorite search engine (think Google), to look for more information on topics you can help them with. It's the cornerstone of any SEO strategy.

Keywords and Key Phrases

Before we go any further, I think it is important to note that we're not talking about single words here. You're not going to rank for "butter" for example, even if you are a dairy farmer and that's what your customers are looking for. Instead, what you want to go after are longer key phrases that give you a good indication of what your people are looking for.

For example, let's say you are a small dairy farmer who sells fresh milk at the farmers market and you've been hearing people say they are interested in figuring out how to make butter. A key phrase you may want to look at for a blog post or informative article could be "how to make butter at home with fresh milk" or something along those lines.

If I'm blogging about SEO and trying to find people interested in a training program or a short guide to help them find out what their customers and readers are looking for, I may use a phrase like "best way to find targeted keywords" or even "how to discover what people are searching for online."

How To Find These Keywords

The next question is of course where you find those keywords. How can you find out what your target audience is typing into their favorite search engine?

It starts with a guess. I hope you know enough about your topic and niche of choice to come up with a list of several words and phrases that you *think* your readers may be using. From there you have options. One of your best and free tools is Google. Start to enter one of your keywords and see what the autofill options are. Play with different terms and start making a list. Once you have that list, search each term and scroll down to the bottom of the first search results page. You will see a list of related searches. Add those to your list of keywords and key phrases and choose several that make sense for you and the type of content you want to create.

Another option is to use a keyword tool. If you use Google AdWords, or have at least an AdWords account, you can use Google's free tool which gives you quite a bit of information on search volume and the likes. Other paid keyword tools are also available.

What To Do With Keywords

Use your keywords and key phrases where it makes sense in the title and content of your blog posts, articles, video descriptions, and the likes. Don't force it. Always write for your reader first, search engine second. If you can use it in the title, and definitely use it within your content, multiple times or several variations of your main keyword within the content depending on length. Don't overdo it, but help both your readers and the search engines see what your content is about.

Is Your Site Trustworthy? Simple Ways To Boost The Trust Factor That's Becoming More And More Important For Ranking

If you did an audit of various websites, you'd quickly see that not every page that does on-page SEO well ranks well. They may have chosen keywords wisely and optimized their content for them. Yet still, they are buried deep down in the search results while other sites rank with the bare mention.

One of the main reasons is the trustworthiness of one website over the other and there's a lot you can do to make sure you measure up. Show the search engines and just as importantly your readers that you have a website that can be trusted.

Install a SSL certificate. You want your website to be accessed through the more secure https protocol. Speak to your host about getting this installed and what steps you need to take to make sure your entire site is converted over. Most hosts have a fee for the certificate, though some of them will offer it as part of their standard package.

Improve your website's load time and make sure it is mobile accessible and responsive. These technical details are becoming more and more important when it comes to ranking well. If you don't get this right, you're almost dead in the water. If you are using WordPress to run your site, choosing the right theme will go a long way towards helping you accomplish this.

Add privacy policy, terms of service, and FAQ pages to your website. Not only will the addition of these pages (and making sure you link to them from each page on your site), signal credibility to the search engines, it will also show your visitors and potential customers that you are serious about what you're doing.

Social signals are another important part of trustworthiness. We are social creatures who look to others for cues on who we can trust and who we should avoid. Set up social media profiles to go along with your site. Build your audience there and share your best pieces of content regularly. As others like, comment, and share, your credibility will start to go up.

Last but not least, work on credible content and only try to get links to your site from credible sources. It may be tempting to go on sites like Fiverr to buy traffic and links, but it will likely do little good and hurt you in the long run. Instead, build that reach and those links organically and over time.

Boost Your Authority And Make Sure Google And Your Users Take You Seriously

As soon as you start to learn about search engine optimization, you'll hear about site authority. Usually right after you learn about keywords. And for good reasons. It is one of the big factors of how well you will rank for anything on your entire site. Let's look at what you can do to boost your website's authority.

Internal And External Links

The most basic sign of authority is the one that was first implemented in the birth days of Google. The idea was that as people find high-quality and helpful content and link to it the cream will rise to the top.

While things have changed since then and a lot of safety measures are in place so you can't scam your way to the top by buying links, your site authority is still largely determined by the quality of natural, high quality incoming links.

How do you get those? By sharing great content and getting the ball rolling by telling your target audience about it. How do you do that? Social media is a great option, which also brings us to my next point.

Social Signals

Once you start to get the ball rolling on social media sites, others will start to share your content. Guess what. That gives you incoming links and it sends what are called "social signals". As your post about your latest blog post or article get shared around and liked, your content and with it your site gain authority. This will build over time, as will the last thing we'll talk about.

Website Age

Age will also help you as time goes on. The best time to have registered a domain was ten years ago. The next best time is today. Get started, get high quality content up, start sharing it with the right audience and your authority will start to grow as time goes by. Don't obsess or worry over the age factor. It is what it is. Building search engine traffic takes time and not just because of the age factor. Instead, continue to work on your site, knowing that ranking will become easier as time goes by. This is in part because of your website's age and authority, but also because you have more content on your site that will rank for a variety of keywords, and as you grow your audience they will help you spread the word, creating more social signals and incoming links for you.

This is not an extensive list of what improves site authority. There are lots of different factors involved in it in addition to this. Search engines are deliberately vague about what moves the needle at any given time. That said, these are the ones that are most in your control and what I have found to help most.

How The Small Guy Can Win - Relevancy Matters

Large websites (think Wikipedia) and those that have been around for a long time, often have a leg up in the competition for the top search result spots in your favorite search engines. That doesn't mean you don't have a shot though. In an effort to bring their customers - the people that type in the search - the best results possible, search engines like Google are weighing relevancy quite heavily. And that's what you can use to your advantage even as a small guy. Here's how:

Be Specific - Go After The Long Tail And Niche Down

Don't go after a top keyword for your niche. Let's say you're selling blue widgets. Don't go after the term "blue widgets". Yes, it gets the highest search volume, but not everyone searching will be ready to buy blue widgets from you. Maybe they are looking for blue widget images because they are curious what they look like. Maybe they are looking for instructions on making their own blue widgets, or they want to find someone who can manufacture a lot of these blue widgets for their own shop.

Instead, go after the long tail. Use key phrases like "where to buy blue widgets online" or "best place to buy blue widgets in Springfield". Even better, find a way to set yourself apart from the competition by becoming the place that sells blue widgets for bicycles. Make yourself the expert

Stay On Topic

Relevancy is all about staying on topic. A small website dedicated to share great content exclusively on one topic will rank higher than larger sites that share everything. That's why despite its huge authority, Wikipedia doesn't rank for everything. Even though there's a page on just about everything on that site. Let's say you decide to build a site about gardening. Pick a niche within that and stick to it. That's how you may become one of the authority sites about something like rose gardening, or building a year-round herb garden.

Each time you work on a new piece of content ask yourself if it is on topic. Don't try to be everything to everyone. Relevancy matters.

Go Local Where It Makes Sense

I touched on this earlier, but it's an important topic, so let's dive a little deeper. Where it makes sense, it can be very beneficial to make your content local. Instead of becoming one more seller of yellow widgets online, you could become the seller of yellow widgets for your state or your town and rake in the profits.

Of course this doesn't make sense for everyone. But let's say you are great at email marketing. Instead of putting up yet another site and offer yet another course to everyone in the English speaking world on the topic, go after the small businesses in your area. Become the expert for email marketing in Springfield. Not only will it be much easier to rank for this longer tail keyword, it also opens up all sorts of new options for local marketing. And don't forget about higher priced products and services that you can offer locally like in-person workshops and consultations.

Let's Talk About User Behavior And What It Has To Do With SEO Rankings

The best SEO campaign and high rankings won't help you if you don't take user behavior and preferences into consideration. It starts with things as simple as what keywords and phrases you choose to rank for. If you pick something that your ideal customers and client aren't looking for or the phrase, your content, and your offer don't match, that keyword ranking is doing you no good.

But it goes much deeper than that. What the search engines - Google in particular - want to see is that when someone clicks on a high ranking search result matters. They want someone to click on that link, go to your site and spend some time there consuming your content. What they don't want to see are low clicks (in comparison to other search results on that same page), or worse have someone click through to your site, hit the back button, and then go look at a different site.

What does that mean for you as a content provider? Always create your content for your target audience first. If you're looking at a list of keywords that you want to create content around, ask yourself if a particular search term matches your audience and the content you share. If so, go ahead, if not, move on to a better keyword choice.

Then sit down and write your content for your readers first. Then, when it's written and polished, go back and look at the title. Are you using the keyword in the title? If not, can you rework it and still have a compelling title. Remember this will be the headline that shows on social media and in the search results. The same goes for metadata like the description and the URL. If you're not sure what I'm talking about, go do a google search and look at what those individual search results look like.

Last but not least scan through the content and ensure that you're using the keyword once or twice in the content and also related words and phrases. Search engines are smart and these latent semantic keywords help them determine what your content is about.

With well-written, targeted content you will ensure that your audience clicks and sticks, which will help you move up in the search engine rankings. Not sure if that's the kind of content you're creating? Ask your readers if this is what they were looking for. If it isn't, they will tell you.

Putting It All Together And Formulating A Solid SEO Strategy For Your Site And Your Business

In previous blog posts I've shared quite a bit of information with you about coming up with a solid SEO strategy that can boost your rankings and the traffic Google and the other search engines send your way. By the way, I haven't spelled this out yet, but Google is what you want to focus on. It is your best shot at traffic and if you optimize well for Google it will work well for the rest of them too.

Start By Setting A Goal

The first step of any good strategy is to set a goal of what you want to accomplish. Without a goal, you won't know if you're succeeding. You also can't gauge what it will take to reach your goal. Decide how much search engine traffic you want from your content by the end of the month or the quarter. Then get to work. Start by taking a guess at how much you need to publish to reach that goal.

Determine Your Topics And Your Publishing Schedule

Next, it's time to make a list of topics that you want to write or record about and come up with a publishing schedule. This doesn't have to be set in stone, but you're much more likely to get it down if it's on the calendar. Commit and do your best to stick to it. Then it's time to start writing.

Find Your Keywords

Do your research and find the keyword that you think will give you good results. There's no way to know for sure if they will work for you until you try. The good news is that you can tweak and change, or simply create more content based on other keywords. Remember, you want to rank for keywords that indicate that people are looking for what you have to offer.

Publish And Monitor Rankings

Publish as you go along and keep an eye on rankings and traffic. Make a spreadsheet of your keywords and look at the rankings - using an incognito web browser - once a week or so. Install Google Analytics and keep an eye on the traffic you have coming in through search.

Work On Social Signals And Incoming Links

Each time you publish a new piece of content, spend some time to share it on social media. Get the ball rolling and share it around. If you have an email list, email them about it on a weekly basis. The more your content is seen, the higher the chances someone will naturally link to it.

Rinse And Repeat

Keep writing and recording. Keep publishing. And keep sharing both old and new content on social media. You're in this for the long haul.

Track, Test, And Adjust As Needed

Last but not least, take some time to stop every once in a while and examine your data. Is your SEO strategy working? Is it working as well as you'd like? If not, what could you try to do differently. Maybe it's publishing less frequently, but writing longer blog posts instead. Maybe it's using more social media friendly images. Or less. Maybe it's taking the time to create five new pinnable images each week. Keep learning about SEO and tweak your strategy as you learn and try more techniques.