



HELLO SEO

moving beyond having a great looking site that no one sees

THE 3 PILLARS OF SEO

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SEO is a strategy to appear higher in relevant search results. SEO is how people find you!

What is SEO?

Unfortunately it isn't the name of a long forgotten 80s band that is due for a massive comeback. It stands for Search Engine Optimization, which is way more boring than washed up bands from nearly any decade. But it is still super important! Most people don't go directly to your website, they search on Google for something related to your business. **If you aren't on the first page of Google search results then you probably aren't going to get very many visitors.** SEO is a strategy to appear higher in relevant search results. SEO is how people find you!

What to expect

The good news is that SEO, especially when first starting out, can have some solid results. Over time, however, you have to start putting in more time and effort to see less and less results. This doesn't mean that you should stop, in fact, Google changes how they rank sites over 400 times a year! The bad news is that, especially in the beginning, it takes time to see results. Typically up to 6 months per change made on the site. For some changes the results will be more expedient, but don't create and post a new landing page, and then immediately jump over to Google Analytics and expect to see visitors come piling in. I'm telling you to *be patient so you don't give up hope*. I'm also telling you, so you can remind me because I'm terrible at taking my own advice in this area.

How do you do SEO?

There are hundreds of ranking factors, but the three largest by far are **Technical SEO, Content, and Links**. The first two are actually pretty broad factors, and the third, while fairly straightforward, is still pretty integrated into a lot of overall aspects.

Let's take a look at each one.

Technical SEO

Technical SEO has to do with how your site is built. There are a couple of things that are extra important. *Speed is a big one.* If your site takes a loooooong time to load, people are going to leave. And if Google knows that people are going to leave, then they aren't going to bother showing your site to people in the first place. Also Google is **REALLY** in love with how your site performs on mobile devices. In fact, if your site doesn't work right on mobile devices, Google will put a little icon next to it in search results so people know that it is going to be a pain to visit while on a phone.

YOU CAN TEST YOUR SITE HERE:

<https://www.google.com/webmasters/tools/mobile-friendly/>

Choosing how your site is built is also very important. We use Wordpress (which is different from wordpress.com). Wordpress is a CMS (Content Management System), which makes it great at not only being just a plain website, but also a blog, store, news site, and nearly everything else. *About 25% of all websites are built on Wordpress which makes it the most popular platform in the world.*

Wordpress does not have its own hosting though so you will have to find a good host. If you want quicker, simpler options that still look good but are much less flexible, some current popular web platforms include Squarespace, Shopify, and Wix. **Generally speaking, the easier it is to set up, the less control you will have over SEO and even design.** Sometimes clients will begin designing their own site on Wix or Squarespace and then pay someone else to build their website. This means that the client spent their time and their money instead of just one or the other.

Content

Content is the most important part of your SEO strategy. Not just content, but regular quality content, and lots of it. *Google determines what your site is about by reading the content on your site. That means that you need more than just pictures (since Google can't see what is in your beautiful pictures), you need great shareable text that clearly tells what you do and what you have to offer.* And you need to answer questions that people are actually asking, not just what you think they are asking.

But how do you know what people are actually asking?

GREAT QUESTION!

Finding the right keywords can be tough AND trends change, so something that works well for you today might not tomorrow. *Fortunately finding the right keywords isn't a total shot in the dark.* One of our favorite free methods for checking is *Google Trends Explore*, a fun easy comparison tool that compares how frequently keywords are searched for in a given area over a specific time period.

One of the best keyword research tools is built into Google Adwords, but you have to set an account to use it. It can be overwhelming at first, but it's excellent.

Go ahead and take some time to explore right now!

Once you've figured out what your core keywords are, it's time to add content. For example, if you are a bakery in Springfield, "Springfield baker" is probably going to be one of the keywords that you would want to rank for. You should develop a strategy that involves a landing page that contains that keyword in the title and has content about that keyword. So, don't build a landing page for Springfield bakery that's all about how to fix a transmission, keep it close to the key words.

Links

A link (where you insert the address of someone else's site on your site or vice versa) are like the currency of the internet because they are so valuable. Generally speaking, *if content is how Google knows what your site is about, links are how Google knows if you know what you're talking about.* In social media there is sharing, for the rest of the internet there are links.

Let's say that you have a real estate website. You've been working real hard on your content and created landing pages for different areas that you cover and have a blog where you write about home buying tips and current trends. You're content is quality and regular. *If there are no links to your site, Google might think that even though you have lots of quality, you might not really know what you're talking about.*

SO HOW DO YOU GET LINKS?

The first and most important way is to get listed in directories. Yelp, Google My Business, Better Business Bureau, and industry specific directories are right where you should start. There are a lot of directories out there and some may have pulled your info already but you should still check to make sure that info is correct. Most of these directories are free to be listed in, and if you are short on time, there are paid services that will make sure that you are listed properly in all of the major ones.

The second popular way to get links is to answer relevant questions in forums, preferably local forums, but that isn't a requirement. *Don't spam them, and be up front about who you are and what you are linking to* (people don't like to feel "tricked" into visiting something). But if someone has a question about whether stainless steel appliances are still trending in new homes or on their way out, and you just happened to have a great blog post on the new matte finish appliance styles then feel free to let them know.

Another great way that is even easier for you is to get a guest blogger. *Find someone who is an authority in your industry or community* (preferably someone who has their own website, social media following, or blog). Often people are flattered to be asked, and will post a link to their guest blog on their own website and their own social media channels. And of course, on their guest post you should link to their website (see now, links are like currency?).

What To Avoid

KEYWORD STUFFING:

Five to ten years ago, adding the keywords you were trying to rank for a million times in an article or even hidden in the background by using white text on a white background actually helped your rankings! Not only did that make it a pain to read for actual visitors, but Google has since gotten wise to these kinds of cheap tricks. **It still helps to put your keyword in the title and early in the first paragraph, but other than that, just keep it natural and readable. No cheating!**

LINK SCHEMES:

Links are so important and valuable that people are happy to sell them! Unfortunately, as quick and easy as this is, Google strongly discourages it and will even penalize you if/when they catch it. It honestly will probably work for awhile but you will be caught eventually and the penalty will hurt worse than the temporary benefits. **Don't buy links, no matter what they promise.**

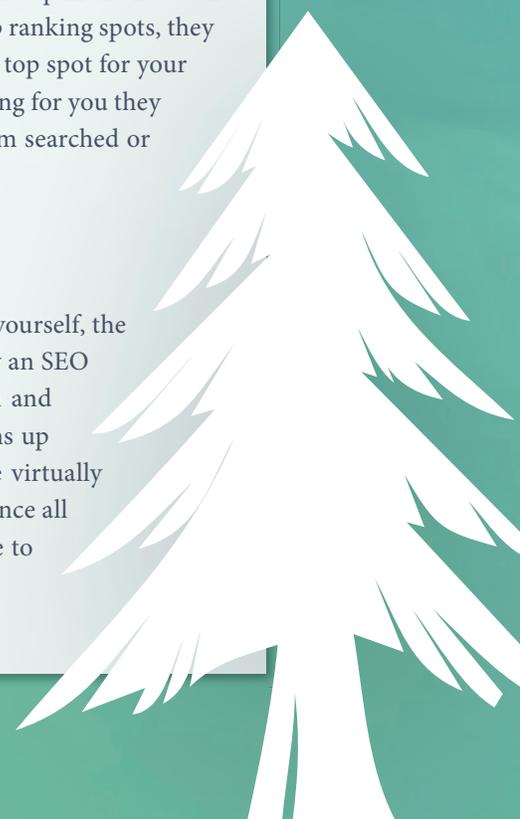
PROMISES:

You're a business and you need to make your money count. So you decide to go with SEO service that emailed you out of the blue promising to get you to the top. **DON'T DO IT!**

Here is why: No can actually make that promise. Remember how I said that Google changes things over 400 times a year? Right, we don't know what Google is going to do, and often we don't know what they did during the last change until we've had time to research because Google seldom announces it. You also don't know what your competitors are going to do. They may be investing millions in content, building thousands of links, and more. Or they may wind up in the news and going viral. You can't predict any of that. Even if the company guarantees top ranking spots, they are probably not for keywords that matter. It is relatively easy to rank in the top spot for your own site name, but if someone already knows your name, they aren't searching for you they are just going directly to your site. Or they may get you to rank for a seldom searched or low competition keyword that doesn't actually bring in traffic that engages.

IMPATIENCE:

SEO takes time. Give any SEO company or yourself, the benefit of the doubt and at least 6 months to start seeing results. This is why an SEO company usually requires a contract because often a client will hire them and might even sink in the rankings after the first month as the company cleans up any previous messes. **Don't be impatient, it takes time to grow.** Just like virtually every other aspect of your business. You may do great on opening day but once all of your friends and family have spent all they are going to spend, you have to build up regular customers from there. The same is true with your website.





HERE'S HOW TO TAKE THE NEXT STEP

We would work with you and your team to develop a strategic plan that fits your objectives and partner with you to implement our plan.

From technical SEO and content generation, to adword management and live streaming, we've got your back!

Looking forward to our next steps together!

