



# SEO Survival Guide

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# SEO Survival Guide

## INTRODUCTION

Let's start by answering the most basic question: **What is SEO?**

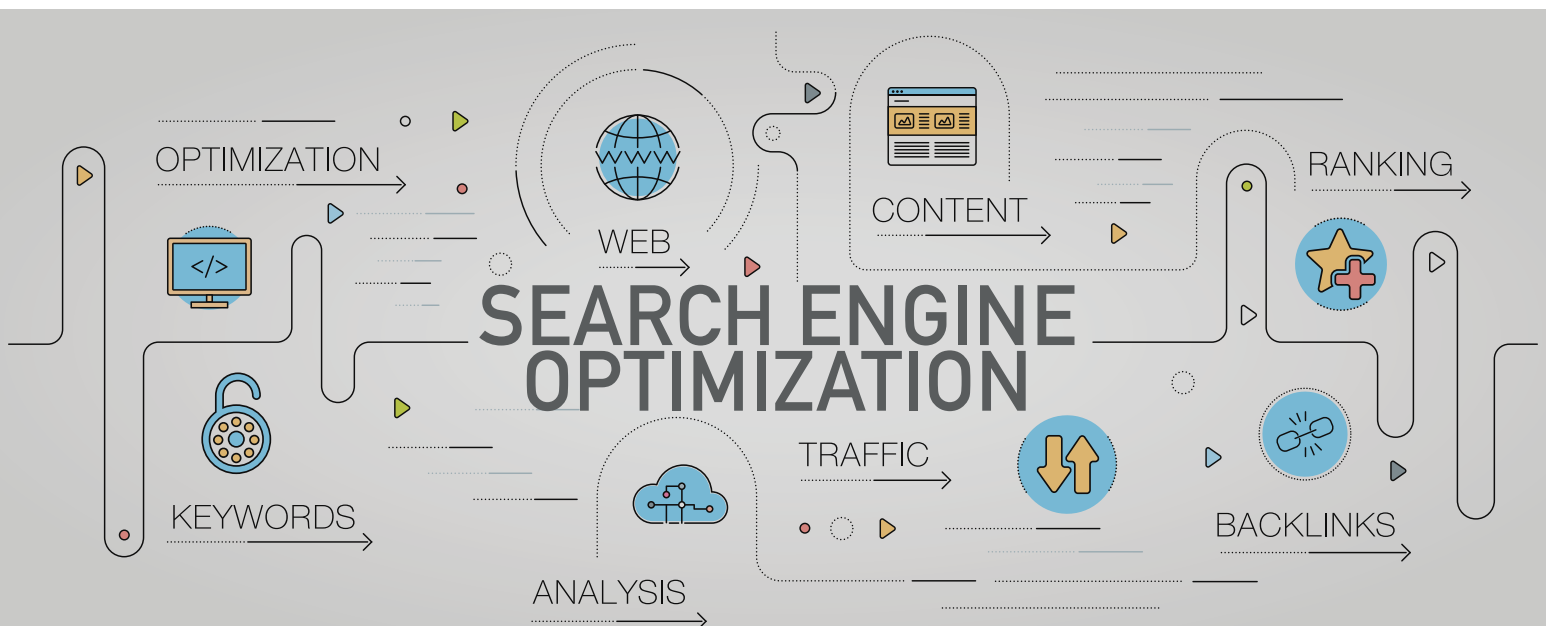
Search engine optimization (SEO) is the practice of using tools and methods to increase the quantity and/or quality of traffic to a website organically (non-paid advertising). It's not attempting to improve quantity or quality using paid ads that appear in search results.

There are an average of **6.5 billion web queries every day**, and millions of websites, many of them competing for the attention of your prospects. To rank as high on the search engine results page as possible for **terms related to your products and serves** — and the problems they solve — you need to master search engine optimization tactics.

SEO is not a straightforward topic, which is why so many misconceptions have popped up over the years. Below are some we hear most often:

**"Rank is all that matters."**

Although search rank will always be a measurement of success, it's important to look beyond whether a website holds the first or second position on the search engine results page (SERP). Today it's pretty common for two users to get completely different SERPs based on what they have previously searched for, and context in which they're searching. Although rank can be a measure of success, it should not be the only one. Remember, too, that a good SEO strategy is about attracting people to your site; if your traffic is improving, you're seeing success.



### “My content can only have one topic.”

There’s nothing wrong with focusing on a niche vertical with your content, but all businesses should be open to including multiple broad topics. A larger content reach can tell Google that your site has broader appeal, with the result that more traffic is brought to your site. Even if you’re in a niche industry, there are connections to other related topics that potentially bring in additional qualified leads.

### “I need to target high search volume keywords.”

Chunky middle and long tail keywords will yield more qualified traffic than short tail keywords which everyone is using. [As an example, by targeting the search term “whey protein ingredients for commercial dairy applications,” you will get more qualified traffic than by targeting the keywords “whey protein.”]

### “I only need to do SEO for my website.”

Search engines weigh multiple sources on the internet, including social media platforms and online press releases, so optimization must be executed for everything you do online — videos, image alt tags, Twitter updates, etc.

### “Search engines only search text content.”

Although the text on page is important, there are many other on-page factors that influence your search engine results page rankings. We will cover that more in depth in our On-Page SEO Chapter.

Search Engine Optimization can be intimidating, even for people who have experience with it. In this guide our goal is to share key insights into what really affects your rankings and outline tactics any industrial manufacturer (any company, really) can implement. As you are reading this guide, if you get hung up on a term check out [this dictionary](#).





## CHAPTER 1: The Core of Rankings: Algorithms

So, what exactly determines what appears in the number one position on a search engine results page? To answer that question, we're going to assume that you're using Google, since over 77% of the searches globally are done through this search engine.

Google's search algorithm is what determines which website will be in the first position. Google continues to update its algorithm, optimizing it for the user's experience (if you want to check out the full history of updates, MOZ has a great running list of algorithm updates). Organizations that play by the rules and focus on improving their SEO by following Google's guidelines will improve their likelihood of being found by the right audiences – not just any searchers, but those who want the solutions you're selling.

There will always be some tried-and-true components you need to work on when it comes to impacting your SEO. Luckily for us, SEMrush conducted research that identified what the factors are that determine search engine result page positions. Below are 17 of them, in order from most important to least important, that influence your SERP results:

- |                            |                              |                      |
|----------------------------|------------------------------|----------------------|
| 1. Direct website traffic  | 7. Total referring IPs       | 13. Keyword in body  |
| 2. Time on site            | 8. Total follow-backlinks    | 14. Keyword density  |
| 3. Pages per session       | 9. Content length            | 15. Keyword in title |
| 4. Bounce rate             | 10. Website Security (HTTPS) | 16. Keyword in meta  |
| 5. Total referring domains | 11. Total anchors            | 17. Video on page    |
| 6. Total backlinks         | 12. Keyword in anchor        |                      |

Yes, there's a lot to digest, which is why we're going to take a look what each is and how to impact each with on-page or off-page SEO tactics.



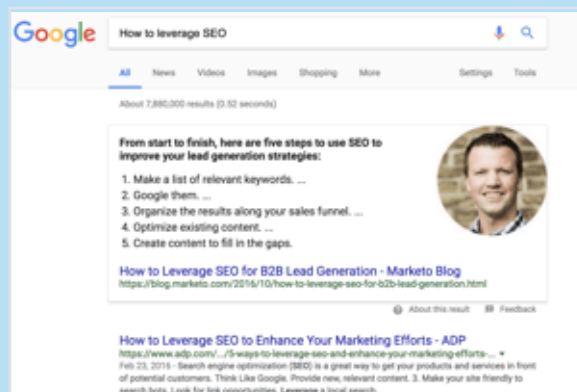
# CHAPTER 2: On-Page SEO

## What Search Engines Are Looking For On-Page

On-page SEO opportunities revolve around the quality and quantity of the content on your site, and around how you utilize the keywords you want to rank for. These are what you have the most control over, and the easiest items to improve your SEO.

- **Content length** – Although there’s no “one-size-fits-all” when it comes to content length (this is mostly due to the fact that the quality of the content is a more important factor), the length of your content does factor into your SERP ranking. SEMRush found that, typically, higher-positioned results had more keywords
- **Website Security (HTTPS)** – Google has noticed that security is important to the majority of users, which is part of the reason it now factors Website Security into rankings, although it’s not a huge influence on SERP ranking
- **Keyword in body** – 82% of domains ranking for high-volume keywords have the keyword in the body of their text
- **Keyword density** – Keyword density refers to the number of keywords on a page. It’s clear that SERP first-position holders typically have more keywords than others, but heed our warning: do NOT keyword stuff! Doing so will put you on Google’s naughty list and you will be banned
- **Keyword in title** – HTML titles and tags help crawlers identify the content on each of your site’s pages. Make sure titles contain relevant keywords to clearly identify to search engines (and visitors) what content will be covered on each page
- **Keyword in meta description** – It’s more important that your meta description accurately reflects what the page is about than having keywords in it. Get tips on [how to craft a meta description here](#)
- **Video on page** – New to the list is video. Although video most likely won’t provide keyword visibility, it does show Google that you have quality content, a sign that users should choose you over your competitors

Google is now looking for answers to questions that users enter into the search engine, and keywords are just one part of this. Your writing must be informative and educational, not stuffed with keywords. Natural writing is seen as a plus to Google because readers value that content more than content that’s obviously written with Google in mind. A great example of this is the introduction of Snippets. A featured snippet is an “answer” selected by Google that best generally answers the searcher’s question; if he wants to learn more, he can choose to visit the source of that Snippet answer.



# Strategies to Optimize Your On-Page SEO

Before implementing an on-page SEO strategy, you'll need to conduct keyword research to ensure you're going after the keywords that will be the most impactful to your business.

## Keyword Research

Since Google's Hummingbird update in 2013, the role of keywords in SEO has been reduced. Google no longer values individual sets of keywords entered in the metadata. Instead, the search engine places an emphasis on the content of each page.

Page titles and page descriptions are still important to Google, only because Google wants its searchers to have the best user experience. Instead of writing page titles and descriptions to cater to Google, write your page descriptions and page titles for the user. Google's algorithm reads pages similar to how an actual person reads, and will penalize pages for keyword stuffing and awkward writing just to fit keywords in. You want to be descriptive and honest, but you still need to stand out.

The next step is to investigate how your website or blog ranks for specific keywords in the SERP for that particular search query. This technique will help clarify which keywords need to be targeted to rise in the page rankings. Using Google, it's important to be logged out of any Google account when looking for the accurate SERP or if you are using Chrome you can use the incognito mode. **When a Google user is logged in, SERPs change to reflect his or her past searches.**

Another step to take is to make sure you have 301 redirects in place so you don't receive 404 errors from any URLs that may no longer be in use. By using the 301 redirect, you redirect a majority of that link's authority to the new one. It's basically telling Google that the new link is replacing the old one.

These tips are the beginning of a keyword research strategy. By continuing to tune and adjust to new information, you'll build a more targeted collection of keywords that will grow and shape your SEO strategy.

Keywords should still have a role in your SEO work, specifically for the on-page copy of your website. Unfortunately, Google has made keyword search data unavailable to users, making it more difficult to understand what people are searching; Google also eliminated its free Keyword Tool. But do not fear, there are other tools you can use to develop your keyword strategy.

# Search Engine Keyword Tools

## Google

One place to gauge keyword traffic is the Google Keyword Planner. This free tool caters to pay-per-click (PPC) advertisers, but can still be utilized for organic keyword research. The Google Keyword Planner is similar to the previous Keyword Tool, showing a keyword's monthly search volume, both globally and locally (local meaning U.S. searches). It also provides information on the competitiveness of the keyword (in relation to PPC campaigns) and Google's recommended alternatives. Other tools you could use are SEMRush's Keyword Magic Tool and MOZ's Keyword Planner.

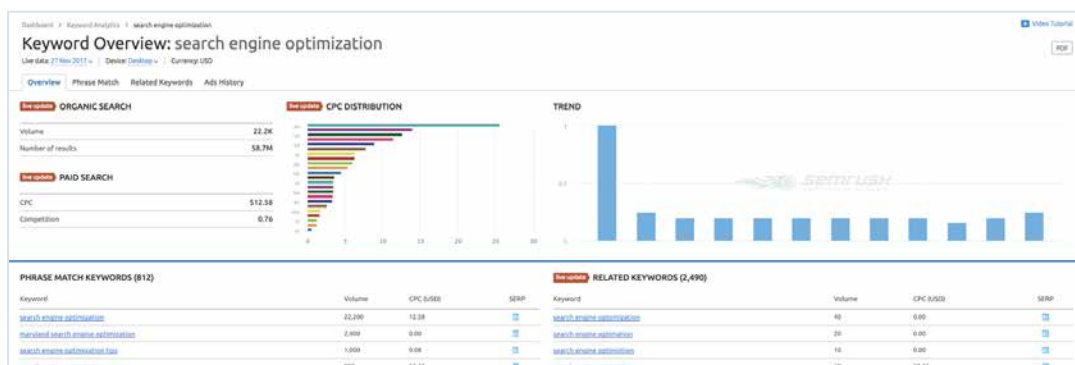


## Bing

You can also utilize the keyword tool offered by Bing once you create an account. Bing's tool is also for PPC campaigns but can be adapted for organic keyword research. The keyword data from Bing is usually similar to the results provided by Google, even though Bing uses a different search algorithm.

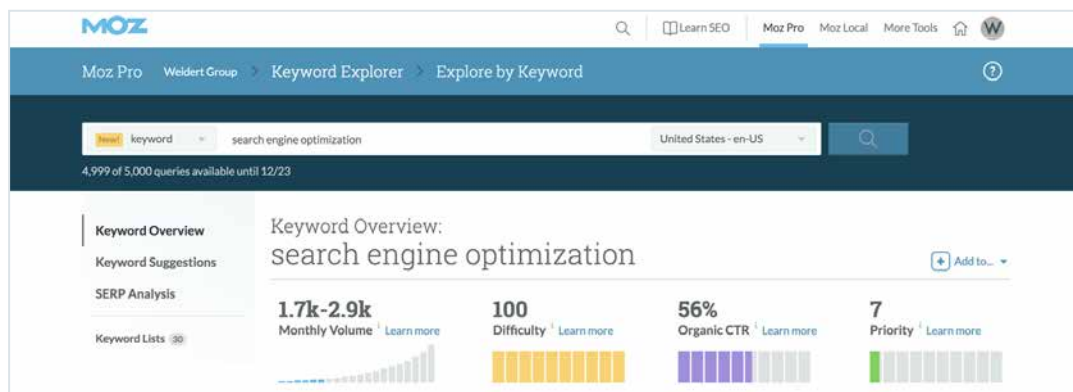
## SEMrush

SEMrush can help you find new keyword opportunities, conduct backlink analysis and review competitors' keyword information. It can also conduct site audits, position tracking (watches where you rank for certain keywords), and backlink analysis of your site.



## MOZ

MOZ has some incredibly cool features including, but not limited to, open site explorer, keyword explorer, and link analysis. The tools MOZ offers focus on growing organic search through the content you create.



## HubSpot's Keyword Tool

If you're a HubSpot user, this tool is extremely handy. Located in your portal, it will show you how many keywords you rank for, what rank you have, the difficulty, monthly search volume, whether you have any campaigns attached to that keyword, and much more.

Whichever tool you go with is the one you should stick with. Bouncing between different keyword tools will muddle your results and have you running in circles. The varied keyword traffic numbers will be confusing, since each tool is sampling from different servers and algorithms.

The screenshot shows the HubSpot Keywords tool interface. On the left, a sidebar lists navigation options: 'Reports home', 'Reports dashboard', 'Sources', 'Page performance', 'Keywords', and 'Competitors'. The main area displays a table of keywords with columns for Rank, Monthly Searches, Difficulty, CPC, and Campaigns. The table is filtered by 'All Keywords' and 'From all campaigns'. The top of the main area shows four summary metrics: 259 Keywords Ranked in Top 3, 373 Keywords Ranked in Top 10, 271 Contacts from Organic Last 30 Days, and 39,738 Organic Traffic Last 30 Days.

| Rank | Monthly Searches | Difficulty | CPC    | Campaigns |
|------|------------------|------------|--------|-----------|
| 1    | Low              | 50         | Low    | 1         |
| 1    | 70               | 81         | \$2.90 | 1         |
| 1    | 20               | 82         | \$0.00 | 1         |
| 1    | Low              | 90         | Low    | 1         |
| 1    | 40               | 78         | \$0.00 | 1         |

# Content Creation

## Creating Optimized Content

The ultimate best practice in SEO today is strong content creation. Regardless of the impact of off-page techniques like consistent link-building and keyword maintenance, all search algorithms look for a foundation of high-quality, relevant content users can use to answer their questions.

Content aimed at optimization should follow four key principles:

1. Content is always important. **Fresh content** (i.e., text, video, images) on a website and blog encourages search engines to visit more frequently, increasing the number of website pages that become indexed. Each indexed page is then an opportunity for your target to find your site when conducting a search.
2. When businesses produce fresh content **frequently**, search performance accelerates quickly. New blog articles, page content, landing pages, videos, etc., all draw the search engine's attention, telling it that, "Hey, this site has great, fresh info related to this search!"
3. The best way for a website to gain organic, non-paid links is by creating quality content that **people want to reference** and link to. Blogs are a format that many users find valuable, as are strong landing pages, downloadable content offers, and multimedia. These type of natural, "earned links" improve the site's credibility with Google.
4. Websites are meant to convert traffic into leads and leads into new business, and advanced content can be the ticket to capturing those leads. By requiring users to complete a form in exchange for content, businesses can also learn what those leads' needs and challenges are, and get good, qualitative data about their content's strengths and weaknesses. Lead conversion may be aimed at the eventual sale, but it can also serve marketers' SEO needs.



## Accelerating Improvements in Website Performance

Once they've established a content strategy, companies usually see a significant improvement in optimization and traffic. One of the key ways to ensure on-page content impacts SEO is to ensure that the website's speed keeps up with the rest of the world's fast pace.

Web users have become accustomed to web pages loading quickly. If pages don't, people move on. Google understands this, so when its crawlers get held up dissecting a website's content because of sluggish page load speed, search rank will suffer.

There are five content optimization techniques that help boost a site's load speed:

1. Large, high-resolution images slow load time. Using the photo editor on your computer or a free tool such as [compressimage.toolur.com](http://compressimage.toolur.com), photos and custom graphics should be reduced to 72 PPI, with pixel dimensions set for the approximate size needed. Downsizing an image using a standard HTML editor will only change the appearance on the screen; the browser still has to load the full image, which can be 3x as large.
2. Google AMP (accelerated mobile pages) is an open source initiative that improves mobile load times. This is meant to make it easy for mobile users ease to view multiple articles. Learn more about [Google AMP and how to leverage it on the HubSpot platform](#).
3. An image's file type can help decrease its file size and load time. Stick with compressed image file types like JPG, PNG, and GIF. Your web design should not include unnecessary graphic elements. There are times when it's necessary to use a custom graphic to display stylized text (i.e., a logo, special header, or ads), but the more you leverage CSS for displaying specific fonts, the faster the page will load. Also, use the correct format for the specific use (JPEG for photos, PNG for graphics and SVG for logos).
4. Never keep video footage in its original recorded format if it's not optimized for the web. Even the simplest editing software, such as iMovie or Windows Movie Maker, can optimize video content effectively. Another option is to host it on a site like Wistia or YouTube. This option keeps your website loading quickly and stores the content on the host site.
5. If you're using a social video host (e.g., YouTube or Wistia), the options for SEO expand immensely. Starting up a YouTube account really means opening another content channel and social media hub—both require regular maintenance. Companies making that choice for the first time have to be sure to do the right kind of keyword research for YouTube optimization, carefully describing each video with keyword-rich tags, promoting the YouTube channel by actively promoting videos, and securing inbound links just like any other web page.

# Content Strategy - Pillars and Clusters

Although there are a number of factors that go into SEO and SERPs, HubSpot is trying to help small and medium-size businesses (SMBs) conquer their SEO strategies by introducing a tool called [Content Strategy](#). With Google prioritizing pages based on relevancy to the phrase/question that was in the search query, this tool is meant to help SMBs build their core content pages around their keywords and phrases.

But HubSpot knows that keywords are becoming more and more obsolete (which we have seen in recent Google algorithm updates) and that the true focus should be the general topics, not specific keywords, and introduced the concept of **pillar pages** to account for that fact.

The pillar page is a long-form website page (more than 2,000 words, usually) addressing a specific topic. While the page is a solid resource in its own right, it also features links to related content housed throughout your site — other web pages, blog posts, and advanced content like eBooks and videos. Between the main content page and these linked resources, the topic is covered broadly in ways that are relevant to prospects.

Pillars (primary topics) and clusters (subtopics) are determined by knowledge/instinct and by metrics. Most businesses have a good sense of what their best prospects want/need to know about, and those make sense as pillar pages. But metrics should be used, too, because they'll tell you what people are searching for, some of which you may not have guessed. HubSpot's Content Strategy tool shows you the search volume of different terms, your domain authority related to those terms, relevancy and core topic similarity to that specific term. [Check out Content Pillars and Topic Clusters 101 to learn more.](#)





## CHAPTER 3: OFF-PAGE SEO

### The Components of Off-Page SEO

Off-page SEO is what impacts your search engine results the most. It's also the most difficult to influence, since most of these factors are outside of your direct control. The biggest misconception is that off-page SEO is only about link building, but it's much more than that.

What search engines are looking for in off-page SEO:

- **Total referring domains** – These are websites linked to yours from their webpages. According to SEMRush, the average difference between the **2nd position** and the **10th position** in a high-volume keyword search (one that sees between 1,001 and 10,000 searches per month, according to [SEMRush](#)) is **10,000 referring domains**!
- **Total backlinks** – Backlinks are those from trusted, respected websites (referring domain) that link to another company's website. These links tell Google that credible sources find your content valuable. This will be the total number of links the referring domain has to the other company's website. For example, if ThomasNet linked to Engman Taylor 54 times, if Engman Taylor was looking at their SEO metrics they would have one referring domain (ThomasNet) and 54 backlinks
- **Total anchors** – An anchor is the text used by the other website linking to your website. The more you have directed at your site, the better it is for your SEO
- **Keyword in anchor** – This refers to the words the linking website uses to your site. Of all factors, this is the least influential on the domain rankings.
- **Total referring IPs** – This should not be confused with referring domain! A referring IP address is actually the IP address that hosts at least one website (but could host many more) that contains a link to the target URL
- **Total Dofollow Backlinks** – There are two types of backlinks: nofollow and dofollow. **Nofollow** backlinks are when another website links to yours but they choose to tell the search engine not to count that as a backlink. A **dofollow** backlink is a link that allows the search engines to count that as a backlink. By counting the **dofollow** backlinks, the website that's linking to your site is allowing the search engine to follow and provide the SEO benefits of a backlink

# Strategies to Optimize Your Off-Page SEO

## Strategy 1: 40% of SEO depends on Link Building

While every page on your website should be optimized by incorporating the right long-tail keyword phrases, this strategy accounts for just a small percentage of SERP performance. One of the biggest factors in SEO is about having strong, reliable **links**. While your control over outside links is somewhat limited, there are six main link-building principles that can boost a website's page rank when applied correctly.

1. **Submit your website's URL to appropriate online directories.** Start with the common local directory listings such as Google, Yahoo, and Bing. Then focus on high-quality niche directories within your industry (ex., Thomasnet). You can use your brand name as the link text, but for higher-quality directories, varied keyword-rich link text is a good move.
2. **Content creation has a huge impact on link-building, too.** Every piece of content on a website has the potential to be linked to, whether it's a blog, an online press release, or some other frequently updated page. Based on a single year of high-quality daily blogging alone, Weidert Group experienced an increase of **200%** in linking domains. In that same time period, our site's link credibility score jumped from 4.1 to 5.4.
3. **Another key business strategy in link-building is utilizing B2B and personal networks.** These relationships build credible links across many online sources, including networks like Facebook, Twitter, and LinkedIn. In particular, posting comments on other blogs, making helpful remarks that indicate thought leadership, and sharing content reciprocally are all important networking actions that can build SEO-enhancing links.
4. **Active participation in blogs through commentary is a way to actively network while generating link opportunities.** Often, regular interaction can earn active bloggers the opportunity to write as a guest blogger on other sites. In guest-writing opportunities, it's important to incorporate a strong keyword strategy while subtly taking advantage of the opportunity to link to one's own site. Guest bloggers are typically seen as authorities on a subject, so readers view their links as very credible.
5. **Repurposing your blogs and other content to create advanced content can lead to huge improvements in SEO.** Whitepapers, videos, presentations, eBooks, and infographics are good advanced content options for your prospects. The potential for these types of content to gather links is high, especially if they are accessible, well designed, and unique.



By using Google Alerts or other social monitoring tools for specific terms related to your industry, you can monitor when others are posting questions or discussions related to these terms, then join in the conversation with helpful insights – even share a link to a blog post or article from your company in relation to the topic within your comment.

- **Posting questions and answers to sites such as Quora or Ask.** By answering other people's questions with educated answers, not only are you helping out another company, you're also beginning to establish yourself and your company as thought leaders in that industry. Continue to utilize these platforms to help grow your network and soon people you're answering will start linking back to the resources you provide them.

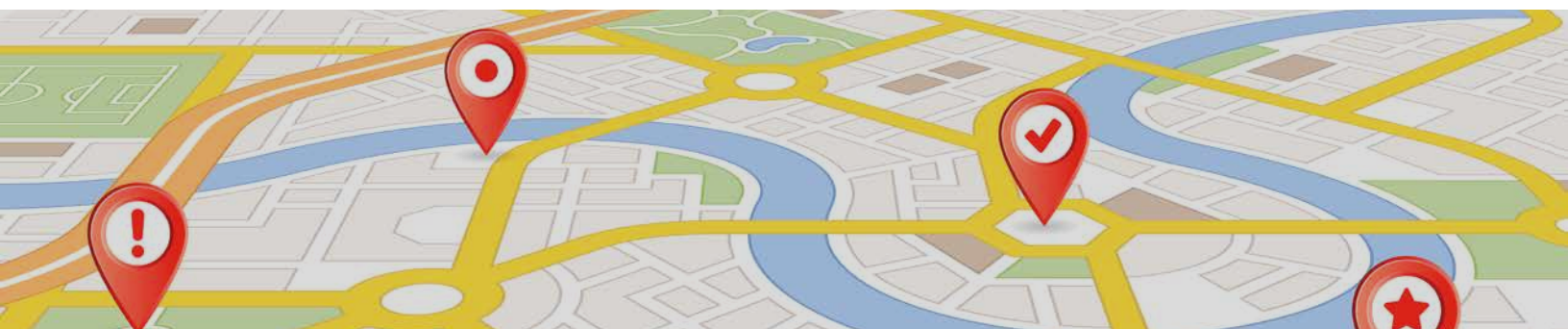
Keep in mind that not all links are created equal. There are good reasons directory links are only the first step — they are not nearly as valuable or as strong as **social links built on good content**. Links from media, trade associations, powerful brands, education sites or government sites are key to gaining great SERP rank quickly.

## Strategy 2: Geographic SEO

For many small or local industrial manufacturers, global domination of SERPs is not the goal. Instead, **geography** plays a large part in determining which customers they serve. The on-page geographic SEO is about adding your region to metadata, page content and blog posts, and many businesses already use them well. However, to ensure a business is reaching the right audience within a specific target region, it's important to have a localized link-building strategy in place.

Focused on a defined geographic scope, directory usage can provide the edge that will push you above others in the SERPs. Here are some tips for targeting a geographic area with directories:

- Register with Google My Business. It's the staple for securing the local search for any business. Creating an account on the site is free, and it usually only requires 15 minutes to complete the profile
- While Google+ is probably the most important local directory option, Yahoo! Local and Bing Business Portal are also geographic SEO boosters. Both offer free listing options and the additional inbound link can help raise a website's credibility, even if the search is through Google
- Niche directories, such as ThomasNet and Industrial Quick Search, can enhance localized SEO efforts. There are a variety of resources readily available, outlining how to select directories based on specific business characteristics
- In addition to directories, review sites offer a huge advantage to local businesses because search engines place a lot of weight on customer reviews (as do prospective customers). In fact, 82% of U.S. adults use online reviews when buying something for the first time. Like directories, many review sites allow businesses to make profiles, which encourage their customers to share their experience. Review sites have the potential to grow links because customers can actively share their experiences in social media and in commentary



## Strategy 3: Social Media

We covered earlier in this ebook that backlinks are critical to SEO success, and leveraging social media links and reaching out to other high quality sources to receive backlinks will help your SEO immensely. This is why social media and public relations are critical in your SEO strategy.

Companies that ensure their websites, blogs, and landing pages are integrated with social media using social sharing buttons and other plugins are leveraging the impact of these signals to increase their relevancy and rank in search. Certain blogging platforms, such as the HubSpot blog platform, have built-in social sharing buttons and integration. Without that convenience, web managers have to do a little extra work. There are numerous social sharing plugins available, including some that have all the most popular social websites collected. The key is to offer sharing options on and off the content page, so that potential links and content awareness grow.

## Strategy 4: Public Relations

Public relations is social content. In this age of content marketing, public relations content is the kind of strong, reliable information that search engines love. PR content — news releases and stories — helps boost SEO results whether on the geographic, global, or virtual level.

News, by definition, can be anything new, unique, interesting or useful. That means it can be content about:

- Hiring a new employee
- Signing a new contract for service
- Winning an award
- Launching a new service
- Creating and offering a valuable new tip sheet or whitepaper

Any of those can be featured in a short press release that you publish on your website. Properly optimized and promoted via social media, PR is another opportunity to create new links and attract prospects to your website. Once a press release is published on the website, good promotion using social media tools is what differentiates today's press releases from those of the past.

In addition to creating press releases, it's also essential to start reaching out to credible sources (trade publications, industry associations, etc.) and asking them to put a relevant link in their content to yours. Maintaining and fostering these relationships with the gatekeepers of these sites is crucial to get them to put you in the running for a backlink. You aren't the only person with an SEO strategy who would want a backlink, and because they're getting inundated with requests, known and trusted thought leaders will be the ones chosen to receive backlinks – so work on those relationships!

If you implement a comprehensive inbound strategy, you'll be generating the authority and knowledge to showcase your company as an industry thought leader. This will give you or your inbound marketing agency all the content it needs to reach out to gatekeepers to start building those relationships.



## SEO Analysis

Now that you know how to impact your SERP rankings with on-page and off-page SEO techniques, the next step is to understand how to measure success. Going back to the top factors that impact your ranking, the first four allow you to measure the success of the techniques you implement.

- **Direct Website Traffic** – This is when a user comes to your site **not** by referring sites. In other words, they typed your URL into the URL bar to get to your site. This is the most important ranking factor because it allows Google to recognize that your domain has high authority and value
- **Time on Site** – This tells you how much time a user is actively on your site. The more time a user spends on your site the better. Combining time on site, pages per session and bounce rate, Google is able to identify the quality of content you're providing to searchers
- **Pages Per Session** – This is the average number of pages viewed during a session on your site. For example, a user could come directly to your site and visit 10 different pages over the course of 4 minutes in one session. If the user leaves and then returns a few hours later, it's considered a separate session (but a returning user if they did not clear their cache)
- **Bounce Rate** – This is the percentage of visitors who leave your site after only viewing one page. For instance, if someone Googled "injection molding," came to your blog post but then left, they'd be considered a bounce. The lower the bounce rate the better

In addition to those four factors, below are metrics you can use as key performance indicators (KPIs) that will help you determine if you're having SEO success.

- **Rank for main converting keywords** – This should tell you where you're ranking for your highest converting keywords. The goal would be that you are either maintaining your position or moving up
- **Rank for target keywords** – This will tell you where you're ranking for your identified target keywords. The goal is that you are either maintaining your position or moving up
- **Changes in traffic volume from your identified keywords** – Outside of rank, a big factor in SEO success is the amount of traffic being generated from keywords. If your traffic volume is increasing, you're doing well
- **Domain authority** – Domain authority is used as a metric to identify how well your website in general will rank in the SERPs and can be calculated by using tools such as Moz
- **Page authority** – Page authority is used as a metric to identify how well a specific page will rank in the SERPs, and can also be calculated using tools such as Moz
- **Percentage change in referral traffic** – If your referral traffic is growing you're doing well building links
- **Percentage increase in referral conversions** – Taking the percentage change in referral traffic and identifying who in that group converted into contacts will tell you where your most valuable referral links are
- **Total amount of links built** – While quality is more important than quantity, it's also important to measure how many backlinks are pointing to your site
- **Number of links from authority site** – This is the number of links coming from a high authority site. You'll want to define where you draw the line of "high authority," since many industries have different thresholds. Keep an eye on this number to see the percentage change as you increase some of your public relations outreach
- **Number of links from relevant sites** – This is the number of links from sites that are relevant to your business and industry. Some more niche industry sites might not be a part of the authoritative list above, so this list allows you to include sites that might not have a huge amount of traffic. Keep an eye on this number to see the percentage change as you increase some of your public relations outreach

# What Will Hurt Your SEO Rankings

Another key to understanding Google's algorithm updates is to keep track of negative practices that you will be penalized for. Here are some of the most important things NOT to do:

- **Paid links** – Purchasing links in hopes of better rankings is now a major violation. Of course, there are ways to get around this rule. Specifically, pay-per-click links via Google AdWords or other credible options are exceptions. The links that Google targets the most are those that are created for free between websites that normally wouldn't have any business with each other
- **Duplicate content** – Although duplicate content is not as huge a penalty as it used to be, it is still something you should be aware of. There are lots of ways to inadvertently create duplicate content: you could have multiple variations of URLs; you could use both https and http; or you could have both www. and a non- www. website URLs. If you're wondering if your site has duplicate content you can find out [here](#)
- **Buying reviews** – Do not purchase reviews! If it's found out that you purchased positive reviews, not only will your reputation be hurt and your SEO be hit, but you could also be penalized with a fine ([Bell was](#))
- **Comment spamming** – Even though there's "nofollow" in the links that are posted in your comments area, you could still get referral traffic. That being said, it is unethical and you should also be aware that if there are spamming comments on your site you could be penalized. It's your responsibility to monitor the comments on your blog and ensure they are quality comments (HubSpot has a great comment monitoring tool that will hide any of the spamming comments you might receive)
- **Hacked website** – This is a result of you not taking action, since it's a direct result of not implementing SSL/HTTPS. By not having a secure site, your website is open to hackers who could compromise your it. If hackers try to inject malicious code, Google will put a notice under your website link when it appears in the SERPs: "This site might be hacked." It's very difficult to get this resolved, so do yourself a favor and implement SSL on your website!
- **Keyword stuffing** – Shoving lots keywords in your meta descriptions, text and content hoping to get Google's attention is a big no-no. Since Google now is prioritizing the context in which the words are placed and penalizing sites that do keyword stuffing, this approach is anything but effective.

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Want to learn more about how SEO can impact your own business by leveraging an inbound strategy? **Contact Nicole today to learn more!**



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