Maximize Potential of SEO by Keeping Pace With Search Algorithm Changes

By Catherine Page

y definition, search engine optimization is a combined method of strategies, lessons learned, techniques and implementations with the ultimate goal of increasing the amount of visitors to a website by obtaining the highest rank or placement in search engine results. Users don't make a habit of searching through dozens of pages of search results to find what they are looking for. Most consumers today rarely search past the first page of search results before clicking on one of the top five websites listed. This is not solely because they have no patience or time but because today's consumer is more knowledgeable and demanding of the Internet and of the companies on the top of search engine results.

The maximum potential of SEO can't be accomplished all by itself. Marketing teams need to finely tune content, social media, branding and reputation in order to allow for each aspect to strengthen each other and balance an overall SEO picture of their organizations.

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For example, if your company is engaged in social media like **Facebook**, content shared by fans, users and businesses will be directly related to SEO-specific parameters like title tags and meta descriptions. The title and meta tags

are basically what you see when someone shares a post on a page or wall. These title and meta tags are, in essence, the first impression users on Facebook will see, and they can be an important part of marketing techniques. Many companies actually require a minimum of seven different social media platforms in order to adequately capture users' attention and loyalty.

SEO professionals need to ask the following questions pertaining to their SEO strategies involving social media in the ever-changing climate of the Internet:

• Is my web content easily shareable, relatable, controversial or impactful?

If Users Can't Find Your Site, Then Maybe It's Not Worth Finding

SEO plays the vitally crucial role of getting your business seen. It provides the first impression of your business for users online. With your website listing being your first point of contact, first impressions and popularity are key aspects.

SEO is a crucial aspect in marketing any business. In 2012, users performed 1.8 trillion Google searches. That's an average of five million searches per day. That number grew much larger in 2013.

For users looking for a product or service that you provide, how do you get on that top page listing to say, "Hey—We're here to help you!" That's SEO. Optimize your visibility in order to be seen by people who are looking for what you have to offer.

The Anatomy of On-Page SEO

- Page titles: This is the most forgotten aspect of SEO. Use your primary keyword at least once, limit titles to 70 characters and divide specific keyword phrases.
- Page descriptions: Otherwise called meta descriptions, this is the text that will appear in the search engine content. Make sure to utilize primary keywords at least once, limiting descriptions to two or three keywords overall. Use a maximum of 155 characters.
- **Body headlines:** Also known as "H1 Heading Tag." Use only one primary keyword. Limit to 70-80 characters and make your text similar to that of your page title.
- **Body copy:** Here is your "On-Page SEO." Where creativity, intuition and consciousness of your user's needs, wants and desires come to life. Make certain that your content is relevant, engaging and regularly updated.
- **Images:** This is the second most under-optimized, forgotten SEO assets. Make sure to add image titles where relevant.
- Internal links: Internal links should help most websites follow this general rule of thumb. A user should only need to click a maximum of three times to get anywhere on your site.
- External links: This is in essence linking from your site to an outside "reputable and credible" site source. It is known to be a significant way of gaining valuable credit with Google's new search algorithms.
- **Meta keywords:** The rumors are correct—this aspect has been laid to rest. After repeated abuse by spammers, Google has decided to exclude meta keywords from factoring into any aspect of determining SEO rankings moving forward.
- Does our social network platform adequately and professionally describe our business and/ or our products?
- Is our business active on relevant social networks that adequately portray us in the correct target market?
- Does our overall marketing goal coincide with that of our ability to distribute adequately to each of our social network platforms?

There are big changes on the horizon for SEO standards with **Google**'s latest update to their algorithm—"Hummingbird." One of the most notable actions across all SEO communities is the shift away from providing keyword data thanks to encrypted search. The ability to access keyword data for research purposes and analytics will now be restricted. Keyword data will still be available for advertising using pay per click on Google's platform, but keep in mind that SEO beats paid traffic from a financial aspect. SEO, which drives 75 percent of search traffic, only uses about 15 percent of most marketing budget allotments, while pay per click provides about

25 percent of results while consuming about 80 percent of allotments.

Google has taken the huge steps in fighting spam for the coming years by requiring its SEO producers to engage in an ultimate chess match of wits. This will require a transition in marketing strategies towards carefully planned-out diagrams for success. Some suggestions include:

- Maintain relevant and meaningful content.
- Perform periodic audits on your sites, making sure to identify and eliminate any existing unnatural inbound links.
- Google will be looking for companies that have robust content marketing strategies.
 These are the type of companies Google will want to support. To ensure your business is well rounded in this effort, make sure your website has regular and helpful content that pertains to your niche market and that it has social signals from regular social network sharing and engagements.
- Make sure your site's content is consistently updated. Fresh content tells Google that your

site is active and not stagnant.

- Social media diversification is a must. Today, being part of one or two different social media platforms is not enough. The more sites you utilize, the more robust your reach will become.
- Invest in **Google**+. This is an absolute critical requirement of Google's new algorithm. In addition to strengthening your overall social media marketing position, all of those individual +1's eventually add up. Google has not yet specified exactly what percent these +1's will directly contribute to the "Social Signal" requirement of their new algorithm strategies, but expect it to be a major factor in significantly increasing your favorability.
- Optimize your mobile game plan. Your site's mobile performance dramatically matters to your SEO rankings.

Google took headlines by storm when they announced their aggressive introduction of algorithm updates, which can make any SEO producer swallow a little harder in fear of what they may need to look out for, backtrack to or even scrap altogether. The best advice is to stick to relevant and pertinent content. Make and remake remarkable content, then continue to build your authority by sharing that content. PRN

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