

The Non-Geeks Guide to SEO by...

Cheap sEO Today

So what is SEO?

SEO stands for “*Search Engine Optimisation*”, so you can see why it is shortened to SEO.

SEO is the practice or as we like to say, “science” of optimising a web site with the aim of increasing its search engine visibility to ultimately get more visitors on to the site. Google now gets 39 billion views each month worldwide. Considering there are only about 6 billion people on earth, of which only about a third have computers let alone the Internet this is not a bad little statistic.

Okay, I won’t insult your intelligence by telling you why SEO is pretty useful, if performed well. But realistically, do you really go past the first page or even the top 5 results to find what you need on Google?

Search engines are designed so well that whatever you are looking for you can find it within no more than 3 clicks.

Meaning, the searcher benefits from a quick search, Google benefits from a happy searcher, and even more importantly your site gets tons of traffic and ultimately serves its creative purpose, whether it be for information, goods or services.

If you imagine Google, Yahoo or Bing as a large city full of shops. Like every city the centre is always the busiest and generally has the most profitable, successful and respected shops. Shops on the outskirts of the city are often seen as having “less quality” and well, being honest generally go out of business much more frequently than those in the centre.

Googles first page is the centre of this particular busy city. And being there is likely to attract you the most visitors, get you the most respect and give you the most business. And yes, I know what you’re thinking, and your right. Every web site does want to appear on Googles first page, but amazingly only 4% of new sites invest in SEO as a product in the UK each year.

Okay, but what actually is SEO, first lets break it down into its two core categories...

The Two Faces of SEO.

These two faces are “Pay Per Click” and “Organic”.

Pay per click

The first category is based around the idea of paying for search engine position. You may have seen “Sponsored links” on the right hand side of every search engine page. Well, firstly any site can display here. Unfortunately, as you have probably guessed from the suggesting name of this category you have to pay for every user that clicks on your sites advert. There are very few hoops to jump through, and adverts can be created and published on Googles first page within about 15 minutes.

Running a pay per click campaign is a great way to generate quick business, but with costs from 1p to £100 per click, running a PPC campaign can be very costly, and dangerous if not managed correctly. For me the real down side to “pay per click” is once the advert is taken down, the large amount of traffic the advert generated goes down with it.

Organic

Organic search is virtually a polar opposite to PPC. Your site will be listed on the main natural results search allowing you to attract users through day or night at no cost per visit. Sadly, like anything worth a high value, organic rankings are very difficult and time consuming to achieve, but are massively worth while.

Organic Search Engine Optimisation really is the David Beckham of SEO. As oppose to its much more high maintenance wife pay per click. But unlike the Beckhams, SEO does not have to be expensive.

For any business looking for cost effective marketing with long term ambition organic SEO is a must. All information from here on out is solely targeted at organic search.

Lets set the scene.

Okay, firstly lets imagine your web site is a politician (thankfully its not).

To get into power, a politician must address two key functions. (I am going somewhere with this, trust me)

- 1) What each individual thinks of him/her to gain their vote.
- 2) The politicians on going reputation as affected by what others around me think of him/her.

Okay, so back to reality. Your web site needs to address two very similar key functions to rank high on Google.

- 1) What each individual thinks of your website, its content, its loading speed, how often the site is updated etc etc.
- 2) And your on going reputation. (Bare with me)

Okay, first lets look at number one.

Make no mistake Google does not care even 1% about your web site!! Google cares about its searchable users, and because it has 39 billion views each month from these searchable users, you will chase and love Google and not visa versa. If Google did not care about its searches so much, no users would search on Google, giving it zero value to you. Meaning you would not be reading this article and we would most likely be cleaning toilets not advising others on SEO. (Not that there is anything wrong with SEO)

Google views your web site from the exact same perspective as the human user. If something is great for the user (i.e- fast site speed) then wahoo, Google gives you a nice big green tick and you rank higher. However beware, if your website users do not like a particular feature Google will give you an even bigger RED TICK! Resulting in a drop in ranking's. The sub practice of analysing your website is called an "On site analysis" and makes up about 20% of your overall SEO campaign.

Even though the 20% on site analysis appears far less significant than the remainder of your off site SEO, do not underestimate the power your web site will have in ranking your site. Nobody wants a site that ranks well, but has very little to offer anyone.

Creating your Reputation. (part I)

The remaining 80% of where your ranking is made up from is point number two. "Your on going reputation with others". In the case of web sites and not politicians, these "others" are not human users but other web sites.

Creating your reputation is done through many different methods, but essentially boils down to building links toward your web site from other sites around the globe. A link from one site to another is seen by Google as an endorsement or vote to the linked site.

A politician wins by getting the largest number of votes. Sadly, this is not the case with SEO. And unfortunately, you do not win by just having a nice suit (web site) or by getting the most votes (links).

Each link carries a value, a poor link will carry virtually 0% value to your site. So getting 10,000 poor links is worth zero. Sorry

Google rates links in two ways -

- 1) The ranking or rating Google has already given the web site where your link is placed.
- 2) The relevance of their web site in relation to the content of your web site.

The ranking attributed to a site is called Page Rank. A simple scale Google rates sites on from 0 - 10. There are hundreds of tools all over the web allow you to view a web sites Page Rank. Your best bet is searching "Page Rank Tool" on Google.

However, achieving high page rank takes a lot of work. Google are let's say far from keen on handing high page ranks out. There is only one 10 rated in the world, any guesses who? Yup, that's right Google.

The average worldwide page rank is 0.7, giving you a good indication of how tight Google are with giving out page rank.

It is important to add that relevant links have a quality of all of their own. So do not be put off linking to low PR sites that are directly relevant to your site. Many low PR sites are in their first year of business and will grow over time.

As their site grows so does the value of the link to your site, and therefore also your ranking attached.

Creating your Reputation. (part II)

Sadly, there is no real tool other than common sense for relevance. There is very little use in linking an old persons care advice service to a web site that sells skateboards, unless you want to see your Granny on wheels.

Take time and look through their site, if they are competing with you directly be strict and do not link to them. If their site is purely written in arabic, then turn them down. If they're not content relevant turn them down. Do not link for the sake of linking.

Don't rush to build your campaign so fast your site explodes. Build them slowly over time, 5 a day for a year is ten times better than 100,000 in a day. Show Google you are taking the time to build links each day and that you take SEO very seriously.

Many SEO's and web sites hold the false belief that linking on poor web sites will get you banned from Google or black listed from all searches all together. This is simply not true. In link exchanging you can only get penalised for who you link to, who links to you is just simply out of your control. It would be very unfair to penalise you because of some malicious linking your competitor has created, with the sole purpose of getting your site banned.

Lastly, it is important to show Google what key terms your site is relative too in each link. These are the particular phrases you wish your website to appear high for when a user is searching. For this we use "Anchor Text". Anchor text is the layering of a key term or phrase over a web site address. This is produced for two major reasons.

- 1) It lets both the search engine and the human user know what your web site address is about in a concise phrase. A link from a content relevant, high PR based site will increase your current ranking for the chosen key term.
- 2) Secondly, it is a much tidier way of displaying web site links.

For example, my links would say "For more information visit **Cheap SEO**"

When the user then clicks on the term "Cheap SEO" my web site would appear.

Maintaining and Monitoring.

Maintaining your ranking as you would imagine is much easier than the initial set up. But no one on Google's top page can afford to take their foot off the gas.

Google database all links ever built along with a link creation date, so it is important to show Google new links constantly. Through updating SEO, Google understands that you care about your web site, through investing your time and energy into a product.

The level of maintenance needed is obviously based around how much SEO your competitors are doing. Monitoring all your search terms on Google manually is the best way to keep on top of not only your rankings, but also new competition that enters the market place.

I would strongly suggest recording your rankings fortnightly at very least. If you have a professional company doing your SEO, request a fortnightly ranking report as many SEO companies won't provide this unless requested.

If you do not already have it, get Google Analytics and study the daily inflow of users, their activity on your site, your bounce rate, etc. This is vital customer research, that can be done through your own web site data. Remember improve the site for the user, and you will improve your ranking's in return.

Make sure you update your own web site any way you can, as much as you can, when and where relevant.

Google loves new content. And by showing content relevant news story that are updated daily or weekly, or features such as a "product of the week" you are showing Google you care about your sites content and what your users think.

Don't worry about your time, much of your monitoring and maintenance can be done automatically now. With the help of news feeds and rank monitoring software.

Well lastly, I think that is it. If you any need further information, please give us a shout on the details overleaf.

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