10 Factors That Affect SEO for Websites

If you've done any research on online marketing or setting up a website, you've probably read or heard the term "SEO". You know it's important. You know it has to be good … but do you know what it is or how to improve yours?

What Is SEO … And How Do You Make Yours Better?

SEO, or Search Engine Optimization, is how people find you organically online. That is, when someone goes into Google and types something into the search, sites that are most optimized for that search term will appear at the top of the list—and are therefore more likely to be clicked on.

Here are ten factors that affect site SEO … and how to improve them for your site.

Quality content

Ultimately, Google wants to provide searchers with answers. And that means serving up good-quality content in each search. So, sites that provide well-researched, useful information are going to outrank self-promotional sites or sites stuffed with keywords aimed only at boosting SEO.

Keyword matching

While good content is one of the most important factors to SEO, that good content has to contain keywords in order to rank for certain searches. For example, if you want to rank for "general contracting" or "real estate", writing about the flora and fauna native to North Carolina—no matter how informational or well-researched—won't get you there. You have to have the right keywords for the search terms you'd like to be found in.

Note: Overuse of keywords, or trying to use keywords in places where they sound unnatural is often referred to as "keyword stuffing". In the earlier days of Google, this was often used to boost rankings, but nowadays, Google's algorithms will usually pick up on that pretty quickly! Quality content over keywords!

Meta tags & descriptions

Metadata is an oft-overlooked facet of SEO, as it doesn't show up on the front-end of a page. Metadata is added to the site's code to tell search engines what a page is about. One type of metadata, Title Tags, tell search engines what your page is called. They differ from the main headline on your page and can be seen in your browser's tabs, as well as on Google's search results page.

Beneath the Title Tag, the Meta Description gives a little more detail into what a site is about. While these don't directly affect your SEO, they do appear beneath your title tag on a search results page, and can help entice readers to click!

Header tags & technical SEO

Headlines are a great way to work in keywords while keeping your content well organized and readable. Think of each page as an outline. Always start with a main title (h1). Underneath that, add some headlines (h2s). You can tuck some h3s under your h2s to add even more informational details. Make sure to add keywords to some of your headlines—but not all of them, as Google could perceive this as keyword stuffing.

Site security

With major hacks and information breaches making headlines on the regular, it's no surprise Google has made security one of its top SEO factors. This means Google wants to make sure your site is encrypted with HTTPS and has an SSL certificate to create a secure connection between site and user. That way, if any information is exchanged, the user's data is protected against hackers.

Crawlability

So, how does a search engine know if you have good content, if you're using keywords, or if your site is secure? The short answer: Google crawls your site. In other words, a search engine will scan and review your website to determine where it should rank.

If you want your site to rank, you'll probably need a good website building site, like Wix, Weebly, Squarespace, or Wordpress. A good site builder should also help you out with creating a sitemap.

Page speed & load time

Your page can have fantastic content, perfectly matched keywords, and top-notch security, but if it takes too long to load, will anybody sit and wait for it? Probably not. Google considers page speeds to be one of the top factors for boosting user experience, and the internet is all about that user experience. So if your page is too slow or takes too long to load, Google probably won't want to put it at the top of the search.

One of the easiest ways to control your site's speed is to keep things simple. Avoid using too many images or videos. Keep page functionality simple. Images that you do include should be resized to fit the page or the space they're occupying.

Mobile friendliness

Once upon a time, all internet searches were done from a desktop computer. But now, most internet searches are actually done from phones, while others occur on iPads, tablets, netbooks, laptops, wide-screen monitors … and more. While it's great that there are so many ways to access the internet, it does present a bit of a challenge for web designers and creators. In short, all these different screen sizes mean that you have to ensure that sites look good on all size screens!

Google is especially focused on ensuring top sites function well on mobile devices. This means that your website design should automatically resize to fit screens (the user shouldn't have to scroll sideways to read text or see images). Fonts should be large enough to be read without having to be zoomed in. And critical content shouldn't be hidden by ads or pop-ups.

User engagement/experience

One of the trickier factors of SEO is user engagement. In order to boost SEO, you have to get people to your site—and keep them there. Google measures several individual metrics under the user experience umbrella. Do users click on your site if it comes up in a search? Do they quickly return to the search page, or do they stay a while, read, or click to other pages on your site?

Clickthrough and bounce rates are big determining factors for Google. If too many people click your page and then "bounce" back, Google will assume your information isn't helpful. However, if users stay a while, or click to other pages on your site, this signals that your page is relevant to the search.

Backlinks

Links are a surprisingly important factor of SEO. There are three basic types of links: inbound links, outbound links, and internal links. Inbound links are a bit difficult to control—another site has to provide a link back to your site. Outbound links are links from your site to other sites. You want to be a bit more sparing with these, and ensure you're only linking to high-quality content and reputable sources. Lastly, internal links tie pages of your site together and can help lead users from page to relevant or related page.

Feeling Overwhelmed by the Subtleties of SEO?

We get it—it's a lot! There are a lot of things to consider, and even more things to know. Couple that with running a business and it can get pretty overwhelming. But that's why we're here to help! We'd love to chat SEO, websites, and marketing, and how we can make all of those better for your business.

Contact Corridor Consulting today, and let's talk about what we can do for your business.