VIDEO 1: WHAT IS SEARCH ENGINE OPTIMIZATION?

Hi there, I'm Dee Dee from HubSpot Academy. Welcome to the class on optimizing your website.

In this training, we'll cover the basics necessary to help you get up to speed. By the end of this class, you'll be able to pick the right keywords for your site, ensure that search engines understand the content on your pages, and start earning links from outside sources.

To start, let's define what search engine optimization is.

Search engine optimization, or SEO, is the process of improving your website so that it attracts more visitors from search engines.

SEO is an essential part of the first stage of the Inbound Methodology. It helps you attract strangers from search engines and turn them into new visitors on your website.

So to understand SEO, let's think about how people find information today.

Let's say someone moves into an old house and needs to replace all of the electrical outlets themselves. What would they do to figure this out on their own? Odds are, they're probably going to head online and enter their question into a search engine. And they'll be specific in that search. They might type in "how to install a 3 prong electrical outlet".

Google gets over 3 billion searches every day, from people who have questions and problems that they're looking to solve.

So search engines need to provide the most relevant, useful, and trustworthy answers. To find them, they send what are known as "spiders" to crawl through all of the pages on the web, searching for that content. Those spiders try to figure out what each page is about.

From that data, they create a list of results that are relevant and useful to searches. Then, they rank those results based on the popularity and authority of those websites. The more visits a website gets, the higher it will rank.

This ranking is what you see when you look at a search engine results page. The first few results and the ones listed on the side are ads - websites that have paid to show up at the top. But below that, you're looking at the top 1-10 unpaid, or "organic", results that contain the most popular, relevant answers.

As marketers and business owners, your goal is to be listed in the top organic results because, let's be honest, most searchers only click on the first few results that they see. In fact, 60% of all organic clicks go to the organic top 3 search results. So how do you get up there?

That is where inbound marketing and SEO come in. You need to figure out what your prospects are searching for, so that you can make sure that they find your website.

In the next video, we're going to focus on how to do the essentials of SEO, so that you can start increasing traffic to your website.

VIDEO 2: SEO STRATEGY AND BEST PRACTICES

There are many factors that search engines take into account when crawling your pages and trying to understand them, so let's dive into some SEO strategy and best practices.

One top factor, and the first element of SEO to focus on, is your use of keywords. This is a part of what's called on-page SEO - optimizing the pages of your site.

Keywords are the words typed into search engines. Basically, they're the topics that searchers are trying to learn more about.

In order to attract those strangers to your content, you need to do research to figure out which keywords relate to your business and your industry.

Your research should always begin with your buyer personas. Your personas represent the searchers who will become your visitors, leads, and ultimately, customers & promoters. You need to determine who they are, what their goals are, and what problems they face, so you can begin to understand what they're searching for.

So put yourself in their shoes and make a list of keywords that they would search for.

Let's say your business makes smart phone accessories, including a waterproof phone case called the "Smart Phone Preserver". And let's say that one of your buyer personas is a teenager - let's call him Lanky Luke.

If Luke drops his phone in a puddle, he has a problem. So what are the common industry questions he might ask? He might start by searching for "drying out a smart phone" - looking for general industry knowledge.

Next, what questions might Luke have that your company provides solutions to? He may not know to search for your exact product yet, but he might start by searching for "waterproof smart phone cases".

Finally, what questions might Luke have when deciding to buy your waterproof case? He might be searching for phrases like "Smart Phone Preserver case reviews". This is a great opportunity to gather information from your sales team - what are the most common questions they get?

By going through Lanky Luke's thought process, you can come up with a list of keywords. Like "drying out a smart phone", "waterproof smart phone cases", and "Smart Phone Preserver case reviews".

As you make this list, categorize the keywords by the stages of the buyer's journey. Industry problem-based keywords are part of the awareness stage. Keywords that your company provides solutions to are part of the consideration stage. And keywords around deciding to buy are part of the decision stage.

Now, while you're brainstorming, make sure to try and mimic the language that your buyer personas would actually use in their searches.

Keep in mind that language may vary in different parts of the world. What is "soda" in one part might be "pop" or "cola" in another.

Alright, time for a quiz! Let's test our knowledge on buyer persona language. Which language would Luke be most likely to use in a search? Is it:

> A) Where is the iPhone liquid exposure device indicator?
> B) Is there an iPhone water damage indicator?
> C) How to tell if iPhone is water damaged?
> D) How to detect iPhone water damage

You've got 10 seconds to figure it out. Ready? Go! Alright - let's see which is the right answer!

It's not A - even though that's what Apple actually calls this feature, Luke probably doesn't know that and wouldn't call it that.

You can then also assume that it's not B - indicator doesn't seem like the type of word Luke would use.

The last two options are fairly similar - so would Luke search for "how to tell if iPhone has water

The correct answer is C - Luke is much more likely to use more casual language like "how to tell if iPhone has water damage"

You can see that there are many keyword phrases that you could include in your list - but you'll only attract your buyer personas with the ones that speak their language.

Now, if you're feeling stumped and can't think of any other keywords to add to your list, expand your keyword list by searching the web for alternatives.

Try typing one of your keywords into a search engine and see what the results are.

In this example, you're looking at the keyword "boat names". When you type it into Google, it autocompletes for other popular keyword phrases, like "boat name generator", "boat name lettering", and "boat name ideas."

You can also look for alternatives under the different search options in Google, like image search or video.

In this example, you can see that by looking under video search, "applying a new boat name" is a related keyword phrase, as is "funny names" and "hand-lettering".

You can also use a tool like keywords.io or the Google webmaster tools to get suggestions.

Add all of the alternatives that relate to your business and buyer persona to your keyword list.

Next, determine which keywords people are already using to find your site. Some search engines, like Google, have encrypted their organic search data so that those keywords are hidden, which make this trickier to do. But you can use an analytics tool, like Google Webmaster or HubSpot Sources, to get some insights.

And finally, decide which keywords you have the best opportunity to rank for. Remember - lots of other websites are trying to rank for any given keyword, and only 10 can make it to the first page of search results. Some keywords are just going to be harder than others.

Think about it, what would happen if you searched for the keyword "shoes"? Well, you'd end up with results for all different kinds of shoes - men's, women's, sneakers, sandals, and only the biggest companies would be on the top of the results.

A keyword like "shoes" is referred to as a short or broad keyword, because that's exactly what it is - short and broad in scope.

If a small store specialized in sneakers, it would be harder for them to rank for "shoes". There's lots of competition around it, and some very popular, trustworthy sites filling up the top spots. The keyword is also very general - the small store wouldn't get any qualified visitors from it.

But let's say you searched for something more specific, like "best women's running shoes for flat feet". You'd get more specific results that would better answer your question.

This more specific keyword phrase is called a long-tail keyword - because it's a string of related words that look like a long tail! It's significantly easier to rank for because it's more specific and targeted. Not to mention, the people searching for that long-tail keyword know what they're looking for, meaning they're qualified visitors who are more likely to turn into leads and customers.

But just because you're selecting a long-tail keyword doesn't mean that ranking high will be easy. It's important to understand how difficult it is to rank for each keyword, regardless of length.

For this, you'll need to drill down into your keyword analytics, researching your current ranking for that long-tail keyword and how often people are searching for it. If you're using a tool like Google Analytics or HubSpot's Keywords tool, you can also see what the level of competition is like for that keyword. Ultimately, you want to aim for keywords that have a higher search volume with low competition.

Once you've identified keywords to target, start creating content around them.

Now, search engines are getting smarter and smarter. In addition to understanding keywords, they also trying to understand a searcher's intent. If you search for "boston soccer team", your intention is probably to find information about Boston's soccer team, the New England Revolution. Google tries to understand what you're actually looking for, looks at all related pages, and then shows you the results that it deems the most helpful. It's not just going to show you exact matches to the keyword that you searched for.

As a marketer, this means that you can create content using natural language and variations of your keyword, like "dog treats", "doggy treats", and "treats for dogs".   You don't have to use the same exact phrase over and over. And don't shy away from mentioning related keywords in your content, like "dog food nutrition".

Anyway, once you've written this great content, it's time to optimize the page where it will be featured.

First, optimize the page around a primary keyword. Be sure that the keyword fits as a description of what the page is all about. You're optimizing for the visitor first, but it's also how a search engine can understand the purpose of the page to know how to best index it.

Add the keyword to the page title. The page title shows both on the browser tab for the page, and also as the link to the page in search results. If optimizing a website page, include your company name as well. Use the vertical bar, otherwise known as a pipe, to separate the two.

Next, add your primary keyword to the URL. This can also be seen on the page and within search results. If using a long-tail keyword, use dashes to separate words (companyname.com/long-tail-keyword-phrase). If editing a live page, any change that you make to the URL will create a new page. So make sure to set up a 301 Redirect that will direct the old URL to the new one, sending people seamlessly to the right page. This will save all of your SEO credit and ensures that you don't break any links to the old page.

Next, add the keyword to the page headers and content.   Use the keyword naturally throughout the page.

If there are any images on the page, add the keyword to the image alt-text. Search engines can't read images, so alt-text allows a search engine to understand what that image is about. This also allows that image to get found in image searches.

Next, add the keyword to the meta description. This is the short summary below the link (or title) to your page in a search engine results... Each page should have a unique meta description, no longer than 140 characters. Though it doesn't directly affect SEO, its optimization can improve the rate of people clicking through to your page.

Another way to improve your SEO is to include relevant links within the content. Linking to relevant, reliable sources helps build the trustworthiness of your site. Don't go overboard - link to one or two sources per paragraph at the very most. You don't want your page to look spammy!

Link to relevant internal pages from your website, in order to drive traffic to them. And while it may sound counterproductive, also make sure to link to outside resources. Google Webmasters encourage this - it shows that you've done your research, helps you build connections, and it gives your readers more helpful resources. For those reasons, outside links work best in blog posts. When you do link, make sure to hyperlink text that contains relevant keywords that you'd like to rank for. For example, this blog post contains a link at the bottom to another sources about "improving your mobile experience", with all of those important keywords acting as the hyperlink.

Edit your page to promote a good user experience. Search engines are also looking at the experience that people have on your site when determining how to rank you.

Make sure your website is intuitive and easy to browse. Don't make people hunt for what they need. Show them the next step they can take with your business, and you'll convert those visitors into leads, and -- eventually -- customers.

Finally, optimize your website for mobile. 80% of internet users own a smartphone. That's astounding!

And as more and more people use mobile devices to access the internet, search engines are trying to make it easier for people to find mobile-friendly websites. So make sure that your website pages can be easily viewed on any screen size. If your page isn't mobile-friendly, you may be missing out!

Once you've created and optimized your content, don't forget to promote it through social media and email. The more that people see, share and link to your content, the more popular your site will grow and the more trust you'll gain with search engines.

We've talked quite a bit about getting search engines to understand our pages, but how can you get them to see you as a trustworthy and authoritative site? Well, much of this will come from your great optimized content, but some of it also comes from the number of links that are pointing to you. This is a part of what's called off-page SEO.

Search engines follow links between pages to see how they're related to each other. Links coming into your website – called inbound links - help search engines analyze how authoritative your website is. If a trusted site is linking to you, your website becomes more trustworthy.

But not all links are created equal. Make sure that you're earning high-quality links, and not focusing on quantity. High-quality links come from existing authoritative websites that are relevant to your business or industry.

To figure out which websites are authoritative, use a tool like the Moz Open Site Explorer or HubSpot Links to see all of the websites who are linking to you and their authority.

While it definitely takes some time, building relationships with authoritative sites and industry thought leaders is one of the most effective ways to keep your company top-of-mind for people who might be interested in linking to you. Use social media, send friendly emails or comment on blog posts. Or try good-old conversation: make connections at local meetups, conferences and in your day-to-day.

A good way to build those relationships and earn those links is to create content with input from those industry thought leaders. Not only will these thought leaders help you write your content, but they'll also share it, giving you new visitors and a new link.

Create a "best-of" list or a resources list, and give credit to the sources or authors. Interview an industry thought leader and publish it as a blog post. Write crowdsourced content - solicit information, answers or opinions on a particular topic from industry thought leaders. Or ask an industry thought leader to write the foreword or give a quote for an eBook.

Now, for some quicker wins.

Set up a page for your business on the top online directories. Directories are websites like Yelp, Yellow Pages, and local chambers of commerce. Having a page on a directory will increase the number of links and citations to your website. Citations are mentions of your business name and address online, even if the website doesn't directly link to you. Both will help with your off-page SEO.

Finally, if your business is location-specific, create a Google+ Local Listing Page. This will help tie your website to a specific location, which Google will use in its search results. If your business is in a single location, link to your homepage. If your business has multiple locations, link to dedicated location page for each.

So there you have it - the fundamental SEO strategy and best practices that you need to start improving the rank of your pages and getting new visitors to your site. Remember to consider both on-page and off-page when creating your SEO strategy.

In the next video, we'll cover some real life examples of companies that that have optimized their website pages.

VIDEO 3: WHAT DOES A SUCCESFULLY OPTIMIZED WEBSITE PAGE LOOK LIKE?

Are you ready to see some examples of how companies have applied their SEO strategy? Let's dive in.

Take a look at a company called AnswerDash to see what a successfully optimized page looks like.

AnswerDash is a venture-backed company that provides instant answers to common questions, right on a company's website. In effect, this cuts down on the number of customer support calls.. Visitors can click on anything they have questions about, and AnswerDash will display the frequently asked questions and answers for them. And if visitors can't find the answers they need, they can ask a new question.

As a startup, AnswerDash wanted to achieve two important goals: to develop a website optimized for generating leads and to acquire 100 customers within their first six months.

By creating an optimized website, they saw a:

- 60% increase in monthly leads
- 55% increase in social media traffic
- and a 10% increase in website traffic

All within the first 2 months. Let's take a look at two of their pages to see how they did it.

First, let's look at the site page about live chat integrations. Did they pick the right keyword?

They're addressing a common topic that their buyer personas might want to learn about: how their software integrates with live chat. They're directly speaking to the possible concerns of their personas.

Second, they're mimicking the language that their buyer personas would actually use in their searches: "Customers appreciate the speed and convenience of self-service, but when they run into difficulty, it's important to allow them to seamlessly connect to you for more personalized assisted service."

And finally, they've created content that uses natural language and variations on the long-tail keyword, instead of using the same exact phrase over and over.

Next, have they optimized this page?

You can see that they have their primary long-tail keyword in the page title, URL, and body, and though you can't see it, behind the image in the alt-text.

Next, are they linking to other sources?

They are- both internal and external sources, in fact. And their hyperlinked text that contains relevant keywords that they'd like to rank for.

Finally- are they offering a good user experience?

Their website is intuitive and easy to browse - the navigation is clear. And they're providing clear next steps, providing visitors a free account, which will help to convert those visitors into leads, and logging in, which will help their customers get to where they need to be.

Next, let's look at a blog post that they've written.

They're addressing a common topic that their buyer personas might want to learn about: what to figure out before hiring another customer support agent.

Second, they're mimicking the language that their buyer personas would use, like "figuring out".

Third, their blog post focuses on a long-tail keyword - "hiring another customer support agent" - which is easier to rank for because it's more niche, more specific, and more targeted.

And finally, they've used natural language and variations on the long-tail keyword.

Next, have they optimized this page?

Again, they have their primary long-tail keyword in the page title, URL, and body, and though you can't see it, behind the image in the alt-text.

Next, are they linking to other sources?

Again, they are- both internal and external sources, with keywords in the hyperlink.

Next, are they promoting their content?

You can see that they have prominent social sharing buttons, which means that visitors can share the article themselves. They've also promoted this content on their Twitter, LinkedIn, and Facebook profiles.

Finally, how well has AnswerDash built outside relationships and gotten other people and websites linking to them?

Look at related articles from outside sources in a Google search of company name. It looks like they've got VentureBeat and Geekwire writing about them.

Looks like AnswerDash is doing pretty well for themselves and is on the right track to improve their rank for this keyword and get some quality visitors to their site.

So there you have it - we've covered the most important fundamentals of optimizing your website for search engines. Now, get started optimizing your pages and building those relationships so that you can see the same results!