

The SEO GUIDE for Event Planners

*Updated With New SEO Best-Practices



An Easy to Follow SEO Guide for Event Professionals

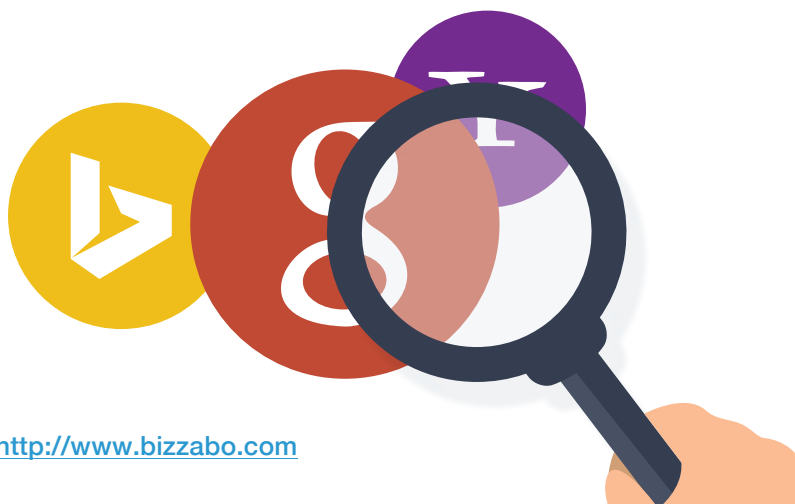
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At Bizzabo, we're always trying to help our event organizers be the best they can be. That's why we've created this thorough, yet actionable white paper. We've filled this guide with easy to execute steps that will help you improve your event website's SEO performance. Better search engine performance means you'll reach more potential attendees, and in turn, will sell more tickets.

Search Engine Optimization or SEO is a big scary term that anyone with a website has come across. Though it might sound like a daunting undertaking to improve your SEO ranking, have no fear! **There are simple straightforward steps that any event professional can take to make sure that an event webpage ranks well in Google.**

This white paper will focus on Google as the primary search engine because it's by far the most popular method of online search. ComScore reported that for August, 2014, nearly 68% of all searchers used Google as opposed to about 20% who used Microsoft sites like Bing and about 10% who used Yahoo search.

There are three sections to this white paper, first we will cover what SEO is and why it's important. Second, we will discuss various techniques you can employ on your website to improve SEO ranking. Third, we will cover what you can do outside of your website to improve your search presence. So continue reading to get some actionable SEO advice designed specifically with the #eventprof in mind.



What is SEO and Why You Need To Improve It:

Before we dive into some steps you can take to rank better on Google's search engine, let's first quickly go over what exactly SEO is and why you should care about it if you don't know already.

Search Engine Optimization is the process and strategy involved in ranking well on search engines. There are a number of strategies that can be employed to ensure that Google will index your website and reward it with a high page rank. If this sounds too complicated for you, have no fear, this white paper will go into digestible detail about how to improve page rank.

It's important to rank well on search engines because a large majority of potential attendees will discover and research your event by starting with a search query in Google. **According to a Forrester Research study, 41% of those surveyed reported that they discovered new products, brands or services using search.** [Click to Tweet](#) Moreover, 53% of respondents reported researching a product, brand or service using search. That means that if you don't have a solid search presence, you are likely not reaching attendees searching for your event.

So read on to find out how to reach more potential customers and in turn, sell more tickets to your event, or conference!

The Elements of On Site SEO

Ranking well on search engines starts with having a solid SEO structure. In order to be quickly indexed by search engines, you want to create a website that the search engine can read easily.

These onsite elements are fairly simple to set up, that means that event planners should be able to take care of them with no outside help. The invested time will be worth it as long as the goal is to raise awareness surrounding your event and to sell more tickets.

If you are swamped planning your next event and do not have time to work on SEO yourself, consider hiring an online freelancer from a site like [oDesk](#), or [Guru](#). Freelancers are inexpensive, knowledgeable and can have a big impact on the success of your event website.



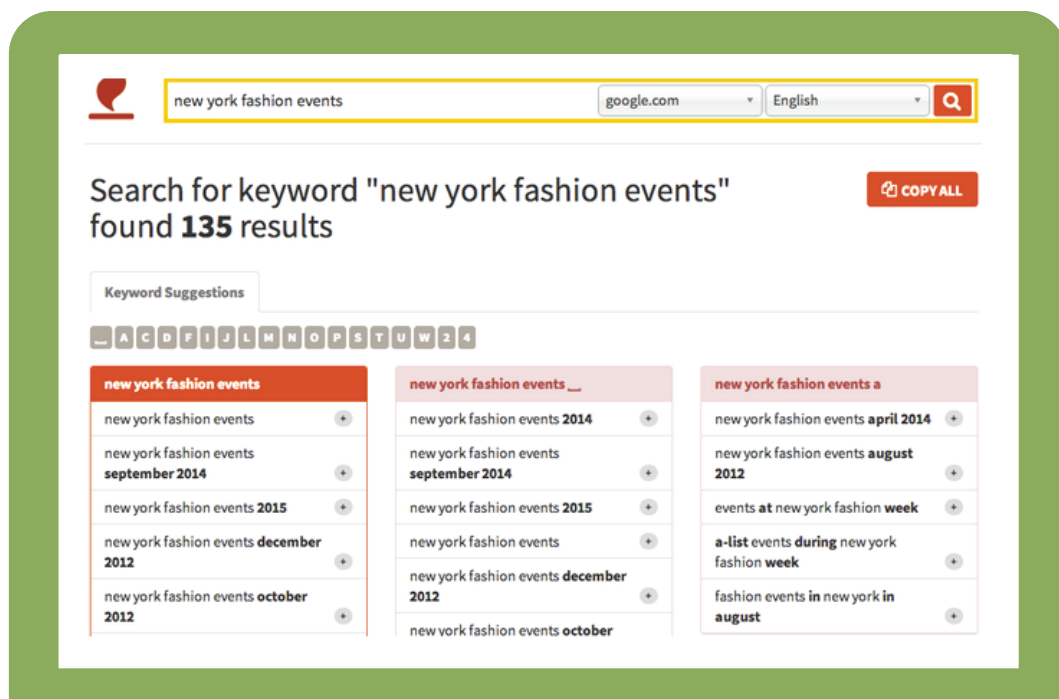
KEY WORDS

Before you begin to work on creating a title tag, or writing a compelling meta description - all stuff that will be discussed a little later - you have to know what keywords you're targeting.

To keep things simple, we'll start with an example. Let's say I'm planning a conference about the future of fashion that will take place in New York City. I want to build an awesome website that will attract a lot of qualified traffic and thus will make it easier for me to sell more tickets.

To create a website to reaches the right people searching on Google, I must choose the right keyword. To do this, I need to brainstorm a list of keyword ideas that I think potential visitors to my website will search for.

I start by going to Keywordtool.io and enter "New York Fashion Events," a list of 135 keywords similar to the one I searched for are generated. Then I click "Copy All" and paste the keywords into Google's Keyword Tool to gain insights on which of those keywords are most popular.

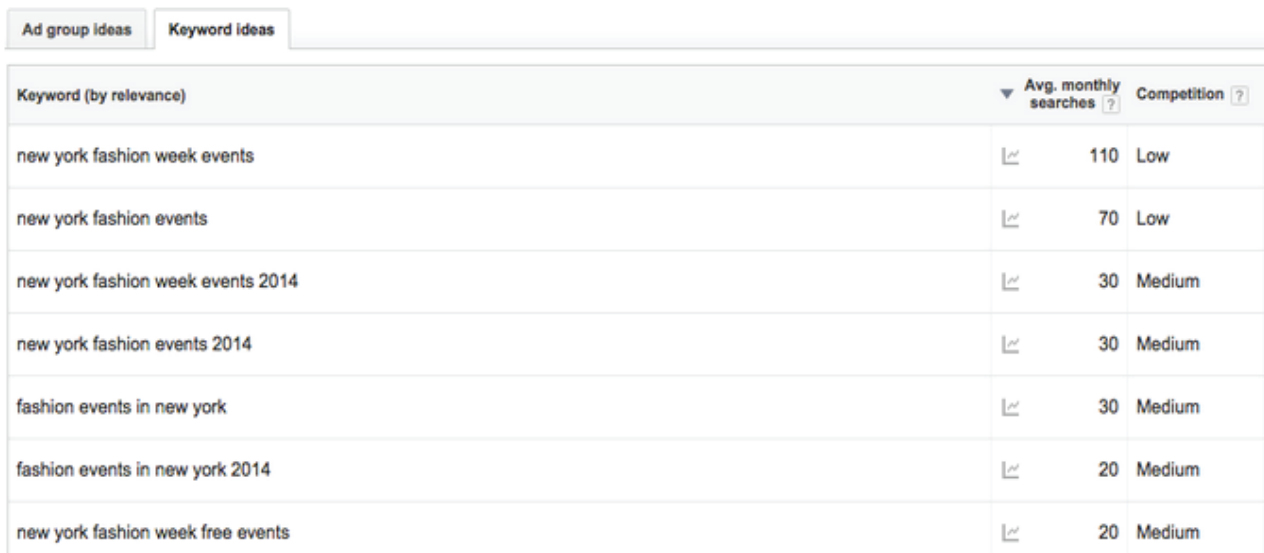


To access the Google Keyword Tool, I go to [Good AdWords](#), then select **Tools** and then select **KeyWord Planner** and finally select **Get Search Volume for List of Keywords**. Then I simply paste the keywords I copied from [Keywordtool.io](#) and paste them into the blank field.

Google's Keyword Tool reveals that the most searched term among the keywords I entered is "New York Fashion Week Events" with an average of 110 people searching this term a month. It scores the competition for this search term as low, meaning that not a lot of people are trying to target this keyword and therefore, it should be fairly easy for my website to rank well for this keyword.

But, targeting "New York Fashion Week Events" wouldn't make sense for my event since it is not associated with the official New York Fashion Week events. Thus the traffic my site would attract would not be the most qualified traffic possible.

Instead, I am going to target my website to focus on the second most popular keyword, "New York fashion events." This will attract more qualified visitors to my website. Now that I've chosen the keyword I'd like to target, it's time to start working on the SEO content on my website.



Keyword (by relevance)	Avg. monthly searches	Competition
new york fashion week events	110	Low
new york fashion events	70	Low
new york fashion week events 2014	30	Medium
new york fashion events 2014	30	Medium
fashion events in new york	30	Medium
fashion events in new york 2014	20	Medium
new york fashion week free events	20	Medium

To recap what happened in the example above, you may want to take a moment to read steps 1 through 3 below, or if you're feeling confident in your SEO skills, just scroll to the the "Title Tags" section.

1. *Brainstorm:* Think of how you would describe your event in one word, and in short phrases. Remember that you are going for qualified traffic, so if you're hosting a marketing event, targeting the keyword "marketing" would not be an effective SEO strategy. Targeting the keyword phrase: "2015 inbound marketing events" would be better. Use the KeywordTool.io to help you brainstorm.

2. *Use [Google AdWords Keyword Planner](#):* This free tool provided by Google is great at helping to determine which keywords you should go after.

Enter the list of keywords you've brainstormed in the textbox, or upload a list of keywords stored in a spreadsheet. Google will show you two key metrics, "average monthly searches" and "competition." These two metrics should be used in tandem to help you select the keywords your website will target.

The best keywords have a combination of high search traffic volume and a low competition score.

3. *Choose your keywords:* Compile a list of keywords you want to target using Google's keyword tool to help you. You'll need enough keywords to be able to match a unique set of them to each webpage on your website. Once you have created your keyword list, the real fun can begin!

Title Tags

They say don't judge a book by its cover, but if we're honest most people do just that (at least some of the time). That's why title tags are important to perfect when working on SEO for your website. The title tag appears at the top of all internet browsers and in all search engines. It is a brief 50-70 character description of what the web page is about.

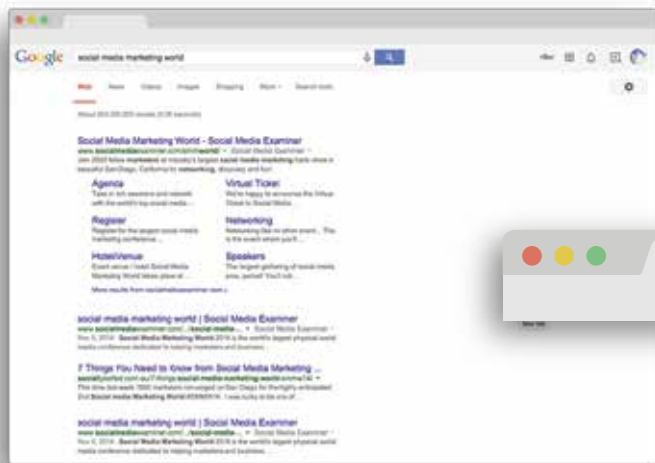
To see an example of a title tag, go to [Social Media Marketing World](#), at the top of your browser, you'll see "Social Media Marketing World: Social Media's Mega Conference! Social Media Examiner." If you Google "Social Media Marketing World" you'll see a similar description in your search results. The title tag lets search engines and users know the content that's covered on your website.

The best title tags are ones that put the most important keywords at the front of the description while also forming a phrase that provides a compelling and honest description for searchers.

Remember that when you are doing SEO work, you should still be thinking of the end user (or attendee), [Click to Tweet](#) not the search engine algorithm. Write a title tag that is compelling enough to get a searcher to click on your result over competing events.

Meta Description

When you search for a keyword, you are brought to a search engine results page, there you'll see various titles of web pages, as well as an accompanying description of what you'll find on the other side of the link. These titles are called "title tags" as discussed above, and the descriptions are called "meta descriptions." ***Meta descriptions do not directly impact a website's page ranking, however they have a big impact on how many people will click on your link when displayed on a Search Engine Results Page (SERP).***



Social Media Marketing World:
Social Media's Mega Conference!
Social Media Examiner

Like a title tag, each meta tag for each of your web pages should be unique. They should be no more than 150 characters in length, or else Google will cut off your description. While the meta description of a web page does not directly impact pagerank, Google will bold keywords in your meta description that match the user's search query. This bolding can encourage a searcher to click on the link.

A good meta description is like any other good piece of marketing copy, it should be short, well written, and tantalizing. It should leave the person reading it wanting more while honestly describing what they will find on the other side of your link.

Meta descriptions not only show up in search results, they also show up when that link is shared on social media, yet another reason to write a compelling meta description.

Alt Text

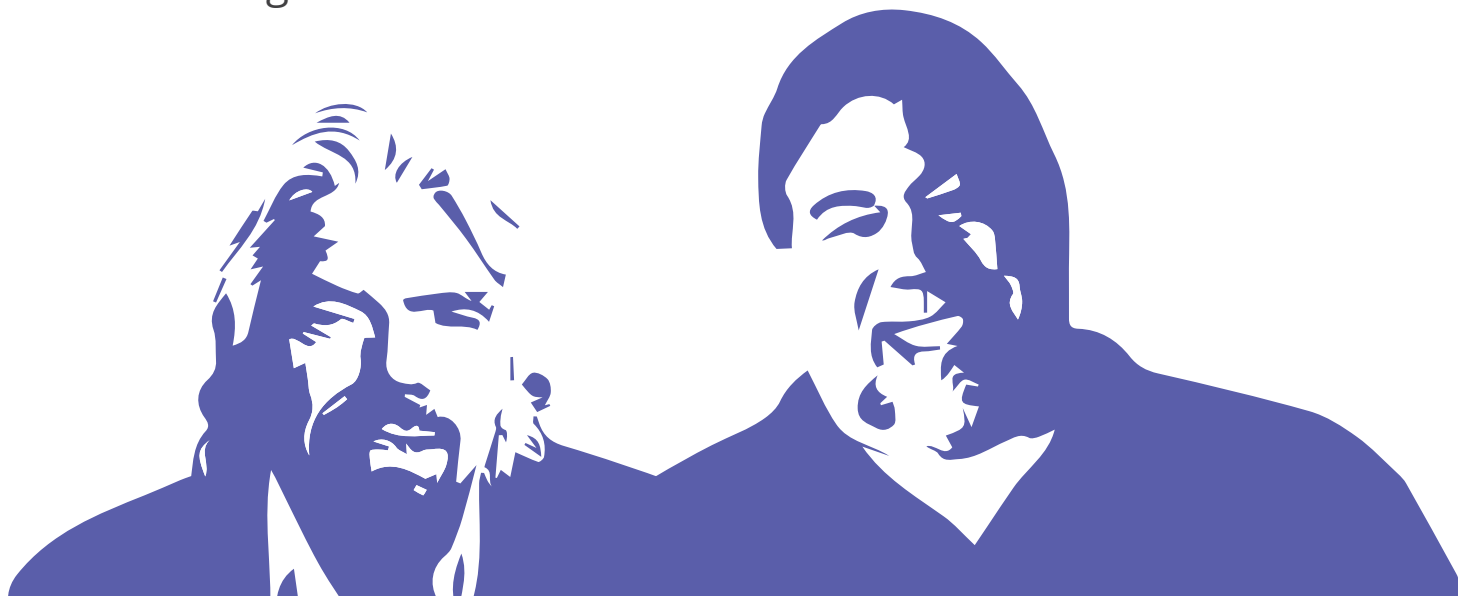
Contrary to popular belief, search engines are not all knowing demigods. Search engines are unable to “see” images. So how does Google know that the picture of your keynote speaker, Steve Wozniak, isn’t actually Richard Branson? The answer is alt text.

Alt text is a written description of an image embedded on a web page.

Descriptions should be between 5-15 characters in length, [Click to Tweet](#) the shorter the better to encourage fast web page load times. It’s best to try to include an SEO keyword in the image description, but only if it naturally fits into the image description.

Having alt text that matches the keywords referenced in the title tag, and the content of the web page is a surefire way to create a website with solid SEO underpinnings.

But alt text is not just written for the benefit of search engines. If for some reason an image cannot load, it’s often the case that the alter text will be displayed in place of an image. Also, if a visitor mouses over an image, it’s common for the alt text to show up in a tiny dialogue box. All the more reason to make sure that your description is well written and accurately describes the image.



Header Tags

Header tag is a technical phrase for a title or a subtitles. There are six different header tags that delineate either a title or a type of subtitle. Creating header tags isn't as simple as making a font bigger. To create header tags, you must have access to the HTML code of your website. Website platforms like Wordpress, Hubspot and Squarespace allow users to easily edit header tags.

An H1 tag refers to the title of a web page. For example, the H1 tag for this white paper would be The SEO Guide for Event Planners. Following the H1 tag are five different sub-header tags which are used to identify the level of importance of a subtitle. For example, an H2 tag will indicate to a search engine that the information bracketed in H2 tags is broader or somehow more important than text identified by H6 tags.

A typical web page will have only one H1 tag, and a mix of 2 to 3 H2 and H3 tags. It's rare for a webpage to be long enough to warrant H4 to H6 tags. Properly structuring content by using these tags will help search engines better understand what you webpage is about, so be sure to make use of these tags.

It's a good idea to use keywords related to the webpage in the header tag as a way of improving your page rank for those keywords. It's also a good idea to try to create a header and sub-headers styled in a way that mirrors a potential search query of a visitor to your website.

If you think a potential attendee might search, "what are the best tech events in San Francisco?" create a blog post with the same title. That way, when a potential attendee searches this question, your event website will rank highly in the searcher's results. Moreover, because the title will match the searcher's query, they'll be more likely to click on your link.

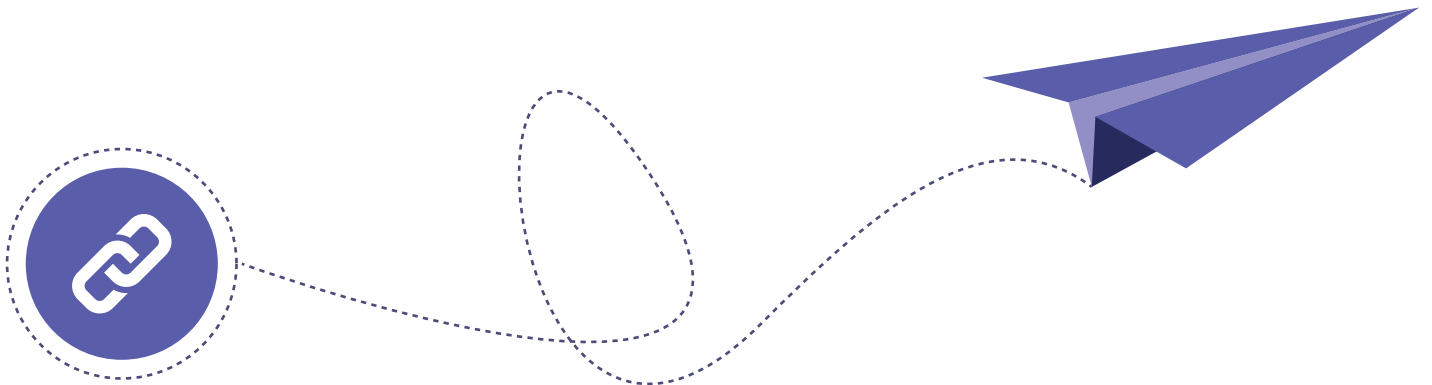
Backlinking the Right Way

A link on one website that leads to another website is called a backlink. When you click on a link embedded in a New York Times article that takes you to another website - you're clicking on a backlink.

Backlinks help search engines determine the authority of a web page.

If your business conference is linked to by other website in your industry, search engines will assume that your website is authoritative. It will reward your website with a high ranking, because it believes that the content on your website is helpful to searchers.

If your website has only a few backlinks, a search engine might assume that your website is not authoritative and as a result, it will be more difficult to rank well online.



Why Backlink:

Backlinking will help you to improve your website SEO by indicating to search engines that your event website is authoritative and thus warrants a high page rank. [Click to Tweet](#) Ranking well online will mean your website will receive more visitors, and more visitors means more ticket sales and increased awareness.

How to Backlink:

The best backlinking strategy is one where you raise awareness about your event and create amazing sharable content that other people will want to share. Creating awareness should be done through social media, and email marketing. Reach out to spokespeople in the industry your event covers and tell them about your event. Invite them to attend your event, or offer them a coveted speaking spot. Encourage your current event speakers to spread the word about your event online, and ask attendees to do the same. Contact local journalists and let them know about your event.

Another way to create buzz around your event, and thus get people interested in visiting your event website is to create content that is worth sharing.

If for example, your event website has an accompanying blog, try your darndest to write great content. Alert people running other websites about your great content through email or social media. If the content is really good, they will share it on their website and will link to your website.

What to Avoid:

If you do enough searching on how to backlink online, you will inevitably stumble upon services that claim they can get your event website linked to thousands of other websites for a small fee. But don't take the bait, this process of backlinking is too good to be true and will result in your website being penalized by search engines like Google.

Tracking SEO Performance

The beauty of improving SEO is that results can be easily tracked. Here are a few tools that will help you to stay on top of your SEO performance so that you can understand what is and isn't working.

Google Analytics: It's free, it's powerful, it's Google Analytics. The platform offers a variety of metrics, such as how many people visited your site, from where, using what device, and for how long. But to keep things simple, focus on the "organic search traffic" metric.

To find this metric, log into Google Analytics, then click Acquisitions > Channels > Organic Search. There, you'll be able to see how many people visited your website in a given period of time as a result of searching for a keyword and clicking on your link in Google's results pages.

If this metric grows over time, it's very likely because of improved SEO. So pat yourself on the back for a job well done!

Open Site Explorer: Powered by SEO company, Moz, the Open Site Explorer allows users to enter any URL in their search box and receive SEO insights for that website. MOZ will rate the online authority of any website on a scale of 0-100 for free. A website with a high authority score is one that has a successful SEO strategy. Visit the Open Site Explorer tool periodically to see how your authority ranking is influenced by your SEO initiatives.

Nibbler: This free tool provides an analysis of various components that create a successful website. Simply enter the URL of a website you'd like more information on, and Nibbler will provide you an assessment of the quality of the website. From meta descriptions, and content freshness, to social media activity, Nibbler will tell you how to improve the overall performance of your website. This is a great way to see what parts of your website can be improved in order to improve SEO.



Update: What Changes To Google's Search Engine Mean For You

Google's search engine is one of the most trafficked websites online, and is responsible for sending billions of pageviews to other websites each month.

As a result, any change to Google's ranking criteria will have a critical impact on the overall performance of your event website. After all, if your event website was ranking on the first page of Google's search results and now ranks on the 5th page, you should expect to see a considerable drop in the number of visitors to your event website.

Less website visitors will surely mean fewer ticket sales, so it's easy to see how a change to Google's ranking algorithm can have a direct impact on the overall profitability of your event.

It's important that event organizers stay on top of the organic search performance of their event websites, to ensure that the site ranks well.

Readers should be aware of a recent update to Google's search criteria, the update is named "Panda" and it impacts the approach that event organizers should take when building event websites.

Create Quality Content - Google's Panda update is designed to reward websites that contribute truly valuable content to the internet, conversely, it will punish websites that post unoriginal or generic content with little new value to website users.

The former head of Google Webspam, Matt Cutts, explains that users who received a Google Panda penalty should try to locate content on their website that is of low-value to readers, and should do what they can do update it so that it provides true value ([Search Engine Land](#)).

Content that provides value can include written articles, videos or infographics (preferably all three) that help to educate or inform readers. The content should provide new information, or should help to explain existing information in a clearer way.

Organizers should note that since Google is a text-based search engine, content that is over 1500 words will tend to rank better than equally valuable content in the form of video or as an infographic.

Therefore, the most effective content will be text based, with added videos and infographics to further help readers understand the subject matter.

Content should be totally original, and should cite other sources when appropriate.

Creating valuable content does not mean copying and pasting articles from Wikipedia to your event website or blog. Instead, it means that writers must do their own research, and formulate their own opinions.

Well-written articles that are 1500 words or longer, can typically be considered "valuable content" depending on the situation.

Build An Authoritative Website - The reason why event organizers should try to create valuable content, is because doing so, will help to build an authoritative event website.

The Google Panda update is believed to place a greater emphasis on the overall authority score of a website when ranking specific search queries.

So, if you have a highly authoritative event website, and publish a new article on your event blog, it's more likely that the new article will rank well for key search terms, than if you published the same article on a less authoritative event website.

To improve your authority score, you'll need to attract inbound links (links placed on other websites that lead people to your website) and the easiest way to do that, is to write valuable content that other website owners think will help to educate their visitors as well.

Monitor Performance Consistently - Google typically does not announce changes to their search engine algorithm, though employees did acknowledge the Panda update, Google makes changes to it's algorithm each day. Therefore, in order to truly understand how your event website is performing on Google search and on other search engines, it is worth investing in an SEO monitoring tool.

Moz is a relatively inexpensive SEO platform that is easy to use. It allows event organizers to stay on top of their organic website performance, that way if Google does change their algorithm and your site is suddenly receiving less traffic than usual, you'll be able to quickly take steps to remedy the situation.

How To Stay Ahead Of Google's Updates - It might seem daunting to try to stay ahead of Google's continuously updating algorithm, but event organizers who continue to try to help educate their readers will always be rewarded by Google's search engine.

Websites that get in trouble with Google, are ones that try to cheat the system by taking shortcuts, or by trying to fool Google's search algorithm. Instead, organizers should focus on educating their audience, it will help them to stay on the good side of a critical marketing channel (organic search) while also helping to improve reach by engaging in thought-leadership through content production.

In Summary

Search engine optimization is a free or inexpensive way to drive potential attendees to your websites. By following the steps outlined above, your website will attract highly qualified visitors and in turn, you will be able to sell more tickets to your event.

The process of optimizing a website for search can be confusing and time consuming. But we've designed this white paper to provide event planners like you with easy to understand ways to improve your SEO.

Everything that we've outlined can be done by yourself, but if you're finding it a bit too challenging to figure out how to edit a header tag, or create a meta description, there are affordable experts out there who can help.

Finally, because everyone at Bizzabo is committed to making event planners more successful, feel free to email the author of this white paper at: David(at)Bizzabo(dot)com for some more SEO advice.

Ready to mobilize and socialize your event?

Here at Bizzabo, we strive to be the leading social and digital networking platform for conferences. Contact us now for a walk-through of the app & online platform, and for more information on why we've been the app at 6,000+ events and counting.

We'd love to talk to you!

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