A Step-by-Step Guide to Become an SEO Expert

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Winning with The New SEO

The Truth

Many of us are familiar with the term SEO, or Search Engine Optimization. If you're not, SEO was and is the process of seeding your website with specific keywords to help rank your site for what you want to be found for online; specifically, through Google, Bing, and Yahoo. In the past, humans were smarter than the robots used to crawl websites and SEO professionals could outsmart a search robot to increase their page rank.

Why does this matter? Because out of all search results the majority of people click the links only from those top of the page search results, giving the top ranking results the most visitor traffic. The practice of tricking the search engines created Internet turmoil. Well, not really, but it did cause a lot of link farm sites and nonsense content to gain top of page Google traction, leaving people searching for real results in the dark.

Because Google knows all and is all-powerful they started to update how their robots were crawling sites in order to weed out all of the worthless spam sites. The most recent Google update, Panda, helped reorganize the rank and show worthwhile content where it belonged, at the top. Thanks to these updates much of the Internet balance has returned.

However, it has caused many well-meaning SEO practices to become obsolete. For example, you may have possibly paid a SEO specialist to optimize your website and for some time you were ranking #1 on Google and you loved it. Your

website traffic was up and all was well in the world. However, after the most recent update your result dropped to below the scroll and you can't figure out what to do to fix it. Your numbers are down and you feel like you made a poor investment.

First and foremost, the good news is that SEO has not been completely eliminated, there are still some basic SEO practices that every website should complete, update, and take notice of. This includes registering your site with Google Webmaster and submitting your site maps for content, image, and video. Asking Google to crawl your website gives you an immediate edge up over other sites who have yet to complete these basic steps.

Thankfully, all the answers to get you back on track are included in this whitepaper. The answer to most SEO problems is that we as website authors need to stop writing content for the search engines and get back to the reason we started our website- the customer! CEO, or Customer Experience Optimization, focuses on developing a website and the content included to best serve the needs of current customers and prospective customers. Done correctly, your website will naturally rank higher, resulting in higher traffic, and thus, increased sales; all because you are channeling your energy to what really matters-customers and clients. Below you will find **5 key tips** with step by step instructions to implement into your website for a better CEO, thus improving your SEO.

1. Content is King

So often these days website content is developed for the search

Businesses with websites of 401-1000 pages get **6X** more leads than those with 51-100 pages.

SOURCE: HUBSPOT, LEAD GENERATION LESSONS FROM 4,000 BUSINESSES, 2011

engines and not the user. Many of us have lost sight of what's truly important and Google's constant updates are put in place to make right what so many web authors have made wrong. These updates have forced all of us to come back to the basics with the hindsight we have gained through past practices and match them up to create the best websites for our customers. Ideally, the best website for your targeted customer will now rank the highest for Google search results. What exactly is great content? Great content is clear and concise static pages paired with detailed blog posts that all blend well together on your site, while sharing the most expert information in your industry.

Working to create clear and concise static pages can be achieved by stepping back and really understanding who your customers are. By focusing on what your customer wants and what information they are looking for will clear up any confusion on what your main points should be onsite.

Sound's simple right? It is, but finding the time to do it can be difficult. One way to insure you are providing regular quality content is create an editorial calendar for your blog posts. This will map out exactly what you need to write and when you need to write it. Have you not had a chance to start your blog? Take a peek at our blog for some [examples and ideas.](#)

2. Reading a Book By Its Cover

Having a quality website not only improves how you rank naturally on the search engines, but it is also a great indicator of your customer experience. Is your site slow to load and bogged down with large images that take too long to show up? If so, edit your photos so they are appropriately sized for the web; this is just one tip to speed up the load time of your site.

After your site load time, the second most important issue to address is making sure that your site is easy to navigate from a customer's perspective. As a business represented online you want your customers to reach the pages and information they are looking for as quickly as possible, this is especially true when attracting new customers. New customers who have no brand loyalty to your company will not spend time on your site if they are not presented immediately with the information they are looking for. On average, a website has 5 seconds to capture the attention of the visitor.

One way to make it easier for visitors to find what they are looking for is to highlight your site with Calls To Action, or CTAs. A CTA can be a combination of linked text and imagery to bring a visitor to important information, data, or a product on your site. Giving direction to visitors with a call to action is a win-win; it promotes the information you want to share and it helps the visitor get want they want more efficiently.

In the world of online, beauty does matter. It's easy to read a book by its cover, so if you aren't projecting your image in its kindest light you don't stand a chance. Most web users are looking for an experience when visiting websites. That experience includes attractive colors, fonts, and photos. Your photos should be professional without blurring or pixilation. Creating beautiful photos for the web is challenging in itself, it's a good idea to do some research online or take a photography 101 class at a local studio!

One way to know if your images are impacting your visitors in the right way is to include social sharing buttons. The biggest compliment and reassurance you can receive is when someone shares your content, images, and posts online with

their trusted network. Make sure you are giving them the chance to do so seamlessly by giving access to social buttons on all pages and within al posts.

3. UX: A Designers Dream

UX or User Experience describes how well someone is able to engage, navigate,
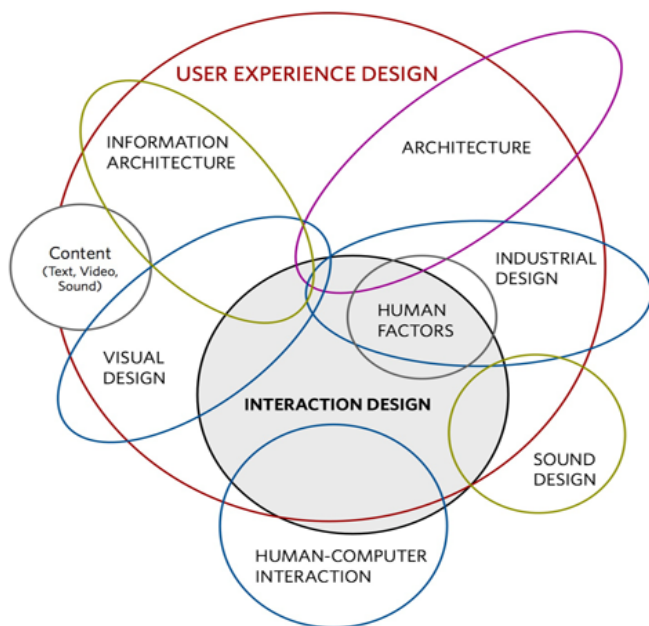
and utilize your website. A proper UX should allow visitors to flow effortlessly through your site finding the content they are looking for and knowing when to post socially or comment on it. Ideally, a website's UX should nearly be able to read a visitors mind, taking them where they want to go before they realize they even need to get there. A good user experience offers proper calls to action and never makes a visitor feel confused or lost on site. UX has a high focus on site design- what graphics are used, how visually pleasing are your images, fonts, colors, etc. Site infastructure and architecture also play a huge role in UX. Your site matrix should offer clear pages, tabs, and links back to information they may have already seen but are worth a second look.

Two great ways to monitor User Experience on your site are by logging on to your Google Analytics and checking the average time spent on site your site and what the bounce rate percentage is. Your site's bounce rate is calucated by how

often a visitor comes to your site and leaves immediately.If time on site is high and bounce rates are low you know you are offering a pretty amazing website and your visitors are taking advantage of it! Social sharing is another good pulse to keep your finger on. If visitors are regularly sharing your content on their social media accounts it means you are sending the right message.

*Image via Dan Saffer

4. Gaining Votes- it's always an Election Year

Inbound links are links to your website from other websites or social media posts. Receiving inbound links helps add to your online authority in the eyes of the search engines and it will also yield more visits to your site because of the clicks those inbound links receive. However, not all inbound links are created equal. For example, if you are a sporting good company and ESPN links to your website it will have a higher ranking authority than if a mom and pop company website links to your site. Ideally, you want your website to be linked to from slightly more influential websites than your own. Inbound links are great credibility for potential customers, which help build brand trust. Further, the search engines use inbound links to boost your site rankings, assisting you in gaining the ever-coveted top of page results. Think of inbound links like votes for your website, while more votes is always a good thing, some votes are weighted more heavily than others; so pick and choose your inbound links carefully. There are countless ways to link build responsibly and proactively, a great resource on link building can be found by reading 32 White Hat Ways to Build Inbound Links. Researching ways to comment appropriately on other
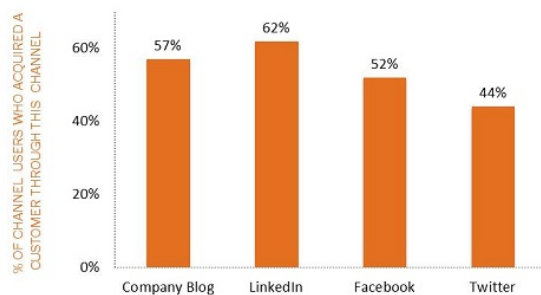
sites, guest blog post, and gain attention for your current content will all be beneficial to your link building.

5. Social Sharing

As mentioned earlier, social sharing is a great tool to show that you are providing value that is interesting to your visitors, which all leads back to your website quality and the user experience. Track your social shares to gauge what is and what isn't popular on your page. Take whatever content is gaining social traction and create more of it; clearly your visitors love it. Not only is it an important way to link build, but also search engines are now counting social sharing as a highly valued weight for search results. If you Google a phrase and someone in your network has

Social media & blogs generate real customers.

SOURCE: STATE OF INBOUND MARKETING, HUBSPOT, MARCH 2012

shared a webpage with the information that you are looking for on a social media site it will rank high for your personal search results. What we share matters and is now accessible and track-able to everyone we virtually connect with.

This also means that your company should have an active social media presence. You cannot expect others to Tweet on your behalf if you do not have a Twitter presence yourself! Some of the easiest ways to gain social traction and engage customers is to get on the social networks and share your expertise. If you share a worthwhile blog post on your social media vehicles, there is a good chance you will receive some Retweets or social shares.

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It's All About The Customer

Many of the 5 steps outlined above share similar information or information that relates to the other points, so there isn't much of a chance that you will perfect some of these steps without working on the others simultaneously. So much of today's customer experience ties together with the same important pieces. If you create your website and your content with the end customer in mind much of this will fall into place with a little hard work. What's wonderful about these steps is that they offer track-able data; it's going to be clear if you are working on creating a site that works for your customers' needs, you'll see it in the numbers. While all the steps and tips above are completely achievable points, don't forgot it takes time to get there- you should be giving yourself a benchmark of 90 days to see results. It takes time to make changes, build traction, and develop relationships online just as it does in real life. Work hard and enjoy the journey!

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To learn more about using SEO to increase your lead generation, download our Lead Generation Survival Kit of tips and tricks.