WHITE PAPER

The Rapidly Changing World of SEO

When You Think of

DEMAND

ACCELERATION

Think of Us.

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Why focus on SEO?

It's a crowded, online world out there. Potential customers rely on search engines to research products and services they need. If you haven't factored Search Engine Optimization (SEO) into your digital marketing strategy, those customers will find your competitors before they find you. It's about being on top, in more ways than one.

So how to bring the digital spotlight onto your company while meeting the customer's search intent? SEO is the key. And staying on top of changes to SEO is essential to success.

Google rolls out periodic algorithmic updates to make the 'search experience' more intuitive and more valuable to the user. While 2016 saw Penguin updates and Google shifting to a 'mobile-first' index, 2017 will see even more. SEO will not remain stagnant.

Your SEO strategy should now include:

- Optimizing for mobile
- Increasing content visibility
- Implementing schema mark up
- Making use of new technologies like Facebook's Open Graph, Google's Knowledge Search and Twitter Cards
- Blogging
- Using social platforms relevant to your industry (Facebook, Twitter and LinkedIn for B2B; Pinterest and Instagram for B2C)

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What's so important?

To be visible to search engine users you must be unique. Your USP won't get across to anyone if they can't find you online.

It's no longer enough to simply toss keywords into your website's content and wait for them to work their magic. The Penguin and Panda updates changed all that, and have necessitated changes in the way we perceive and practice SEO. Today's SEO is all about optimizing for mobile, using unique and useful content, linking your SEO with your social strategy and ensuring your content adheres to developments like Knowledge Graph.

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Critical Areas Influenced by SEO

Google looks at a large number of factors while ranking a site. It is important to know which ones need to given close attention while optimizing your website. Here are a few key factors that have a direct influence on search visibility:

i

3. Critical Areas Influenced by SEO

Website

Your website is the foundation of your SEO strategy. So, it must be well organized and prepped to meet modern search engine stipulations. Define the URL structure of your website. Map the top-level sections and URLs of your website. This will help search engines better understand your website architecture. To build the right theme for the website requires a thorough understanding of the website's structure. Clearly designing the website's architecture helps users' judge web page content during searches. Embracing responsive design technology affords another advantage in boosting your website SEO efforts.

a

3. Critical Areas Influenced by SEO
Website

On page factors

On page factors are crucial to a strong SEO strategy. The aspects included in on page factors are:

- Website/Folder architecture
- URL structure
- Title & Description tags
- Header tags

- Image naming convention
- ALT text for images
- Content optimization
- Inter-site links

Optimize your web pages by ensuring that the page content uses the best performing keywords. If you are refurbishing your website's content tapestry, stitch important keywords into the new content. All assets like press releases, videos, images, articles that are hosted on pages and asset landing pages must include keywords that will boost the asset's Search Engine Result Page (SERP) ranking.

b

3. Critical Areas
Influenced by SEO

Website

Competition Benchmarking

Even if your SEO strategy is successful, keep tabs on your competitors and see what they are doing with their SEO.

Check how your competitors are faring on the first SERP for top keywords. Measure yourself against competitors on important parameters like site content, website linking, factors that contribute to your ranking (page rank, Alexa rank, keyword ranks etc.), social reach and engagement. Analyze how you fare in these areas and identify key focus areas you need to work on.

c

3. Critical Areas
Influenced by SEO

Website

Technical Analysis

Study your website from a technical perspective and see if there are any issues that need to be rectified and if certain areas need a boost which will help in better search engine crawling and indexing of your website. Make sure that your website design and architecture are search engine friendly from a technical standpoint.

Website architecture, which includes giving specific detail to website content, navigation, content placement, information architecture and usability, is now given importance by search engines post the Humming Bird update. Marketers now need to take all these aspects into consideration while "preparing" the website for Organic Search optimization.

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3. Critical Areas
Influenced by SEO

Website

User Focused Content

Study your users' online behavior to define behavioral patterns. What are the areas (related to your industry) about which they want content? Do they favor content in short, easy-to-consume forms, or do they invest time in longer forms of content? Also, keep a sharp eye on trending topics – if a consumer is interested in your company, it's very likely that they are also interested in relevant developments in your industry. Don't use trending industry keywords just because all your competitors are doing so. Those keywords may not be relevant for your company.

Optimize your content by employing writers with expertise in SEO-based writing. Add titles, descriptions and keyword tags at the web page level. Use heading settings from H1 to H6 for your content. Name all your image files and add ALT text for images.

3. Critical Areas Influenced by SEO
Website

Keyword Research and Analysis

A comprehensive list of keywords is an essential part of an all-inclusive SEO strategy. This list should consist of keywords that are currently performing well on your website as well as keywords from competitor sites, applying more research to choose the primary keyword universe for your website. The finalized keywords need to be categorized based on need:

- Core/Focus keywords – high volume traffic generating keywords
- Secondary keywords – medium traffic supporting keywords along with long-tail keywords
- Business-critical keywords – which are critical to business

Do your keyword research, select the best ones and map them to your site's pages. Build a keyword database that enhances the effectiveness of your content by increasing its visibility through better search engine indexing.

The research should add keywords for:

- Optimizing current content on your website
- Optimizing additional content such as articles, YouTube videos and press releases

Categorize your keyword database into three segments: business-critical, primary and secondary keywords. Target 2-3 high performing keywords per page.

Blogging

3. Critical Areas Influenced by SEO

Blogging has come a long way since the time it started. From being just an online journal where people share their thoughts and feelings, it has now transformed into a platform used by millions of businesses and individuals alike. The ease of launching and maintaining a blog makes it easy for anyone to become a blogging expert.

So how can one make optimal use of blogging for their business?

Industry Trends

3. Critical Areas Influenced by SEO

Blogging

Ensure that your blog covers topics that are trending in your industry. Trending topics will draw your target audience to you. Optimize your content by using relevant industry keywords. Also, cover important and popular topics that your target audience might be searching for. Always include topics unique to your company.

Content Development

3. Critical Areas Influenced by SEO

Blogging

Along with industry trends, your content development strategy should include broad match and long phrase keywords. Content that encompasses broad match and long phrase keywords provides balanced conversions.

Detailed content calendars providing specific placeholders aid SEO. Inclusion of new content on a regular basis is essential to SEO.

Keyword Usage

3. Critical Areas Influenced by SEO

Blogging

Your keyword universe should include broad match, long tail and conversational keywords. By combining these kinds of keywords with better targeted content, you provide more balanced conversions and increase conversions on your website. Build your keyword list from your content and not the other way around. Think of unique keywords for each page.

d

Host on Company Property

From an SEO perspective, it is always recommended to host your content on your own digital properties. Make your blog section a part of your website. The resources section, which is rich in content like PDF, PPT, case studies, white papers, videos etc., must also be a part of your website.

All these content assets lead to better audience engagement rates on your website.

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Social

Melding social media marketing efforts with SEO is crucial. With Google paying more attention to social media cues in SERP rankings, it is essential that companies also focus more on their social efforts.

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Originality

Content originality on social media is more important than ever given the vast ocean of content available out there today. If your company's social media content resembles your competitors', how can your content be highlighted? If you don't showcase your USPs, your brand will not stand out in a group of similar competitor companies. Know the unique ways in which your company can help prospects/customers, and communicate the same to them.

b

Twitter Cards

Using Twitter Cards allows you to control and represent the title, description, keyword tags and images connected with the webpage when sharing links on Twitter. Posting the right data on social networks and including optimized images helps content distribution, which can lead to increased references and mentions.

c

Open Graph Protocols

Implement usage of Open Graph mega tags. These enable you to control title, description and tags while sharing content on Facebook and Google+. The Open Graph protocol provides web pages with the ability to become a rich object in a social graph. This protocol is used on Facebook to allow any web page to have the same functionality as other objects on Facebook.

There are multiple technologies and schemas which can be combined to richly represent web pages in a social graph. But, there is no single technology to provide sufficient information that allows web pages to be represented richly in a social graph. The Open Graph protocol builds on these current technologies and gives developers a single technology to implement. A key goal of Open Graph protocol is developer simplicity, which has contributed to many technical design decisions.

d

Schema Markup

Schema markup helps search engines better process unstructured content on your website and provide more rich results in SERPs. Implementing schema markups improves your click-through rates, lowers the website bounce rate and increases long tail conversions.

Users can also find the right web pages more easily. With schema markup implementation, search engines present your content in SERPs in richer ways. Your information appears more attractive. Schema markups for products, videos, organization type, events, people, app listings etc. help move up your ranking on SERPs along with showcasing them in new ways.

e

Content Syndication

Invest efforts in boosting your content's reach and visibility. This provides search engines with more web pages to index, which in turn influences your search ranking. Depending on the content format, post your content on sites that work towards enhancing content reach and visibility. For instance, if you have an exciting PowerPoint presentation about a product, you can upload it on SlideShare and send out an invitation to your prospects/customers.

position²

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Key SEO Trends in 2017

With SEO evolving constantly, it is becoming an industry which is set for long-term growth. With new Google updates every year, SEO experts have more to look forward to in terms of how they can make their websites search engine compliant. Below are a few of the key trends to keep in mind while building your SEO strategies this year:

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Key SEO Trends in 2017

Mobile-first Index

Google's "Mobilegeddon" algorithm update was a signal for website owners to ramp up their mobile experience. This includes making mobile friendly sites in terms of design and user experience and creating mobile specific websites. More than 60% of Google searches happens on a mobile device.

There are a couple of things to remember while creating a mobile website:

• Verify mobile websites on a Search console

• Structured data must be marked up on the mobile website as this won't be automatically sourced from the desktop version.Ideally,optimization must be done for mobile website separately.

• Optimize your mobile site in a way that it passes the mobile speed test.

4

Key SEO Trends in 2017

Semantic Search

The basic functionality of Semantic search is to understand the context of the user query and give the best possible answer to that. The focus is not on the quantity of the content, but the quality of it. A few examples of Semantic Search are conversational queries, auto-corrected spellings, graphical information etc.

4 Key SEO Trends
in 2017

User-first
Optimization

Giving more importance to optimizing content based on intent rather than specific keywords is crucial for your SEO strategy in 2017. Investigate what answers the user is looking for. Once you have this information, alter your content accordingly. Also, keep up with your analytics data to see what is and isn't working for you.

4 Key SEO Trends
in 2017

Rich Snippets

Rich Snippets are here to stay. It has become more important now than ever before to implement structured data markup on your website. Adding structured data to your content will help Google understand the context of your content and make it available to relevant searches.

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Key Highlights

Whether it's the increasing importance of social or the frequent Penguin and Panda updates, SEO shows all the signs of rapid, continual change. Once you learn to keep up with the pace and continue making necessary changes, you will find that your efforts are definitely paying you rich dividends. Take your company to a higher level in the world of search.

Here's a list that reiterates the most important points from this white paper:

- Optimizing for mobile is no longer optional for Search Engine Optimization

- Changing online user behavior will continue to spur search engines to change their algorithms to cater to users.

- The importance of social signals in search results will continue

- Regular Google updates will force companies to keep their SEO efforts updated and ensure they are in line with guidelines

- Developing unique content through practices like blogging and content syndication will increase your visibility

- Keyword usage, especially long tail and conversational keywords, will continue to play an important role in drawing website traffic

- User-centric content that helps solve problems will get you recognition and rewards from search engines.

- Using schema markups will help search engines better understand and index your content

- Stay updated and implement emerging social media trends like Open Graph protocols and Twitter Cards that contribute to more powerful SEO

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Conclusion

SEO done right increases:

- Brand visibility and thought leadership
- Search rankings
- Company website traffic and engagement
- Drive leads and sales

Step up and change your SEO strategy because the importance of SEO is increasing and the way it functions is rapidly changing. A well-executed SEO strategy serves long term company needs and helps reduce paid advertising spend. And that would certainly make any modern day CMO very happy.

About Position²

Position² is a leading Search, Social Media and Digital marketing firm that delivers continuous growth for its customers through its proprietary 'Demand Acceleration' framework which integrates Content Marketing, Paid Acquisition and Marketing Technology Solutions.

The company's adaptive search technology solution is customizable to evolving marketing needs, and delivers integrated search and social media marketing that engages prospects at multiple touch points in the online environment. This results in measurably improved marketing performance.

Position² offers a suite of services that ensure you get the maximum value for every dollar you allocate to your online marketing budget. Each one of our services work in complete synergy enabling you to formulate marketing strategies that deliver on time, every time thus optimizing returns on your marketing spend.

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