SEO made simple

SEO (Search Engine Optimisation) is important for gaining online traffic to your blog and/or website and ranking high in Google searches. It involves a number of key steps both within the set up of your site internally, your content, and externally through other Google applications.

It can also sound a lot like rocket science, brain surgery, or other typically complex procedures, but it REALLY isn't!

I would more compare SEO to a healthy lifestyle. Say you are wanting to make some changes (e.g. lose weight/gain weight/build muscle etc), you might grab a bottle of fancy fat-burner **(add SEO to your site)** which works well in combination with a quality diet and exercise regime (**e.g. good content, authentic marketing, honest engagement),** but you neglect your exercise and diet, therefore you do not see the results you are looking for **(increased website traffic, ranking well on Google).** SEO is often seen as a 'quick fix' to a site's slow or non-existent traffic but in reality, all SEO really is, is a consistent long-term set of strategies and techniques that work best in conjunction with other good online practices.

Basic definition of SEO
Strategies and techniques that are used to improve a site's ranking on Google = more traffic to your site.

How does it work?
Each time your audience searches on Google, Google crawls and indexes online pages to see which websites are the most relevant for their search. What Google is looking for, are these SEO strategies and technologies you have applied to your site, so that it can find and represent the most relevant page for that search, ergo the more optimised your site is, the more discoverable your services/content/products will be!

Why is it important?
A higher Google ranking directly relates to more website traffic - simple. The implications for getting your website ranked on that first page are huge.

A small (but kinda large) note to make
Content > SEO. While SEO is an ingredient to your overall site success, the single most important aspect of your website your **content,** the whole enchilada. Google's goal is to connect an audience to the most relevant and on-point content they're searching for. This means that the most important thing that you can focus on to improve your SEO is to create content that's valuable, appropriate, and **USEFUL** for your readers. If you aren't creating relevant content to attract your ideal audience, no amount of SEO implementation will make them to return (and no one wants that!). Remember, you're writing for people, not search engines. People determine whether or not your site has value. That's why the most important aspect of your website is content.

Super Simple SEO

for your website

INTERNAL (ON YOUR SITE) SEO:

- ○ Write quality, valuable content

- ○ Make your content key-word rich

- ○ Use high-res, clear imagery

- ○ Optimise your images with a tool like TinyJPG

- ○ Use brief but descriptive filenames and alt text for images

- ○ Add page descriptions to your site

- ○ Create unique, accurate page titles

- ○ Write a strong search engine description

- ○ Use correct heading styles

- ○ Have a blog where possible/appropriate

- ○ Make sure you have a custom 404 Error page

- ○ Use accessible link text

EXTERNAL (ON ANOTHER SITE) SEO:

- ○ Sign up to Google Webmaster

- ○ Use Search Console to submit a Sitemap of your website to Google

- ○ Use Fetch as Google to test how Google is crawling and indexing your site

- ○ Add your site to Google My Business to get your business on Google Maps.

- ○ Add Google Analytics to your site

- ○ Utilise backlinks where possible

- ○ Practice authentic social media marketing and engagement

- ○ Try guest blogging

- ○ Find honest sources for influencer marketing

SEO
Search engine optimization: the process of making your site better for search engines.

Index
Google stores all web pages that it knows about in its index. The index entry for each page describes the content and location (URL) of that page. To index is when Google fetches a page, reads it, and adds it to the index: Google indexed several pages on my site today.

Crawl
The process of looking for new or updated web pages. Google discovers URLs by following links, by reading sitemaps, and by many other means. Google crawls the web, looking for new pages, then indexes them (when appropriate).

External SEO
External SEO refers to actions taken outside of your own website to impact your rankings within search engine results pages. This is using all Google's Webmaster tools as well as improving search engine and user perception of a site's popularity, relevance, trustworthiness, and authority.

Internal SEO
Internal SEO refers to actions taken within your own website to impact your rankings within search engine results pages. This can include optimising images, writing valuable content, having descriptive page titles etc.

Backlinks
Backlinks are created when one website links to another. Backlinks to your website are a signal to search engines that others vouch for your content. If many sites link to the same webpage or website, search engines can infer that content is worth linking to, and therefore also worth surfacing. Backlinks are especially valuable for SEO because they represent a "vote of confidence" from one site to another. The process of obtaining these links is known as link earning or link building.

Page titles
If your site appears in a search results page, the contents of the title tag may appear in the first line of the results. It is imperative then to accurately describe the page's content. Choose a title that is brief but effectively communicates the topic of the page's content.

Titles can be both short and informative. If the title is too long or otherwise deemed less relevant, Google may show only a portion of it or one that's automatically generated in the search result. Google may also show different titles depending on the user's query or device used for searching.

Avoid:
- *Using extremely lengthy titles that are unhelpful to users.*
- *Stuffing unneeded keywords in your page titles.*

Heading Styles
Heading styles typically make text contained in them larger/smaller or different than normal text on the page, this is a visual cue to users that this text is important and could help them understand something about the type of content underneath the heading text. Multiple heading sizes used in order create a hierarchical structure for your content, making it easier for users to navigate through your document.

Avoid:
- *Excessive use of heading tags on a page.*
- *Very long headings.*
- *Using heading tags only for styling text and not presenting structure.*

Quality, valuable content
Easy-to-read text with clearly defined topics. Content that is fresh and unique, that is broken up into logical chunks that will help your audience find the content they want faster.

Consider creating a new, useful service that no other site offers. Designing your site around your visitors' needs while making sure your site is easily accessible to search engines usually produces positive results.

Avoid:
- *Sloppy text with spelling/grammatical mistakes.*
- *Poorly written content.*
- *Dumping large amounts of text on varying topics onto a page without paragraph, subheading, or layout separation.*
- *Rehashing (or even copying) existing content that will bring little extra value to users.*
- *Having duplicate or near-duplicate versions of your content across your site.*

Accessible link text
Link text is the visible text inside a link. This text tells users and Google something about the page you're linking to. Links on your page may be internal—pointing to other pages on your site—or external—leading to content on other sites. In either of these cases, the better your anchor text is, the easier it is for users to navigate and for Google to understand what the page you're linking to is about. The anchor text you use for a link should provide at least a basic idea of what the page linked to is about. Aim for short but descriptive text-usually a few words or a short phrase.

Avoid:
- *Writing generic anchor text like "page", "article", or "click here".*
- *Using text that is off-topic or has no relation to the content of the page linked to.*

FURTHER INFO

Alt Text
A descriptive filename and alt attribute description for images. The "alt" attribute allows you to specify alternative text for the image if it cannot be displayed for some reason. Why use this attribute? If a user is viewing your site using assistive technologies, such as a screen reader, the contents of the alt attribute provide information about the picture.

Another reason is that if you're using an image as a link, the alt text for that image will be treated similarly to the anchor text of a text link. Optimizing your image filenames and alt text makes it easier for image search projects like Google Image Search to better understand your images.

Avoid:
- *Using generic filenames like "image1.jpg", "pic.gif", "1.jpg"*
- *Writing extremely lengthy filenames.*
- *Stuffing keywords into alt text or copying and pasting entire sentences.*

Optimise images using TinyJPG
Key to a site's SEO performance is the page load speed. By reducing and optimising your images for web, your site will load faster and your audience will be able to get to the good stuff quicker. Use a tool like TinyJPG to do this efficiently. TinyJPG reduces the file size of your JPEG images. Every uploaded image is analyzed to apply the best possible JPEG encoding. Based on the content of your image an optimal strategy is chosen. The result is a quality image without wasting storage or bandwidth!

Search Engine Description
The first thing that often appears on Google is your site description, so customising your search engine descriptions can have an impact on how your site appears in Google search results. I recommend using your mission statement as your search engine description with a few keywords to help your audience find you.

Custom 404 page
A custom 404 page is a great way keeping users on your site once a problem arises. At some point, users are going to meet your 404 page. They'll click on a broken link, try to access a bookmarked page that no longer exists or mistype a URL. By creating a custom 404 page that helps them find their way back to your homepage, you keep them onsite longer, and Google will see that your site retained a customer, which can be crucial to your search engine optimization goals.

The best 404 pages are the ones that blend in with your site, are simply written, don't scare away users and encourage visitors to continue interacting with your site.

Add some form of a blog or other
Search engines love websites that are updated frequently. This shows them that the websites are fresh and relevant, rather than outdated. Unfortunately, sometimes there aren't many chances for you to update the other areas of your website. This is where a blog can be a handy trick to boosting your SEO. A blog gives you the opportunity to continuously publish new posts on your site. You you are a designer like me, consider creating a 'blog' that is actually a showcase of your work, and every new project is a new 'blog post.'

We can help you with your SEO,
contact us at info@digitallyagency.com