



Why SEO is Critical for Businesses in 2020

7 Steps to Improve your Website Traffic and Enquiries During the Coronavirus Lockdown

Part 1: What Is SEO?

If you are a business looking to improve the visibility of your business online in 2020 it's useful to understand the concept of SEO.

SEO stands for Search Engine Optimisation.

Businesses utilise SEO to:

- Ensure greater visibility of their website in search engines.
- Ensure their target audience find their website through relevant search terms significant to their business.

Search Engine Optimisation

Businesses need to focus on their SEO campaign because search engines hold the key to their success. Your potential customers perform searches daily using search terms relevant to your business. Search engines such as Google then return pages and pages of websites but only those that it sees as most relevant appear on page one.



Therefore, if your business wants to compete and win customers it is not only essential to have an online presence in the form of a website and social media profiles, you ultimately need to appear and be found in search engine results.

Search Engine Optimisation is a combination of actions – it isn't simply having a snazzy website, that website is worthless unless you have the content, links, an understanding of your target audience and of how to go about the process of SEO.

SEO is not a one off process that is ever complete. It's an ongoing process that requires time and commitment. Stopping your efforts because you managed your target of getting to page one will only spur your competition on to compete further.

What can you do to support your SEO Campaign?

- Know who your target audience is
- Carry out keyword research
- Understand your competition
- Create relevant content that will engage your target audience
- Consider combining organic SEO with paid ads
- Content optimisation
- Create landing pages
- Avoid duplicating or copying content
- Keep updating content
- Ensure your site uses clean code
- Implement title tags and meta descriptions
- Create a mobile friendly website
- Ensure your site is crawlable
- Make sure your website is secure

Part 2: Do you Know your Target Audience?

Key to successful Search Engine Optimisation (SEO) is knowing who your target audience is. Knowing who to engage with gives you the power to target your content to gain custom and financial reward.

What is a Target Audience?

Your target audience is the group of people you market your products or services to. That's the people who will purchase your products or services. Knowing your target audience means understanding who they are, where they are from, what they do, how old they are and what specific needs they have. Once you understand these things you can target your content and keywords/phrases more accurately. This will generate the right traffic for your business through your SEO campaign.



How to Identify your Target Audience

Existing Clients

Start by considering your current client base. What are their needs? What do they have in common? How does your business solution fit their needs? Creating a profile of your current customers can help you identify the traits of your target audience.

Your Services

Consider what you are offering. Who can benefit from what you offer? If your product or service is the solution what 'problem' is your target audience experiencing to require your products or services.

Profile

Create a profile of who your potential customers are. Knowing details such as location, online behaviours etc can help you understand where to find them and where to post your content in order to get your message to them.



Talk to People

Talk to people about your products or services. Your customers, friends and family, the general public. Send out questionnaires. The responses you get can help you gain fresh insight into how your business is perceived and how people might use or require your products or services.

Understand your Competition

Understand your competition. Your competition can help you gain insight into your target audience, what your competition are doing well or not so well, how you turn such information to your advantage and build on areas you had previously not considered to discover your niche.

Social Media

Social media gives you a wealth of information at your fingertips. Check out comments on industry related news articles or competitors posts to gauge feeling and get idea for how your target audience relate and engage with the world.

Google Analytics

Google Analytics offers audience insights by showing you who is visiting your site. Who returns? How long do people stay on your site? Which pages prove popular? This information gives you power, it helps you focus and target your content. It can help you realise where you need to re-think your content and where you are succeeding.

Once you truly have a grasp of who your target audience is you can focus on keyword and phrase research and content planning.

Part 3: What is Keyword Research?

Understanding keyword research will help you know what your target audience is looking for and what phrases to use to best reach them.



Put simply, keyword research is the process of researching popular search phrases that your target audience will type into search engines to find what they are looking for – your services. When you identify the keywords relevant to your business, you can include and target your content towards your target audience. This is a vital part of planning your SEO campaign to ensure your content achieves higher rankings when search engines return their results.

Keyword Research

Keyword research, also known as keyword analysis is a multi-step process. Here, we, Web Design High Wycombe talk you through the basics of those steps.

1. Compile a list of keywords and phrases that relate to your products, services and business.
 - Involve employees within your company to help compile your list.
 - Expand your list by reaching out to your customers.
 - Type a selection of search terms into Google and check out the related search terms returned.
 - If you are aware of who your competitors are, check out the key terms they are using.
 - Consider location SEO if you want to rank for a location. To achieve this add targeted geographical locations to your search terms.

2. Use a keyword tracker to understand the volume each of the search terms in your list typically gains.
3. Prioritise your keywords based on the traffic they gain. Choose a selection of keywords to use in your targeted SEO campaign – these can be expanded on at a later date.

Content Marketing

Once you are aware of the keywords most relevant to your business it's time to focus on content optimisation. We will look at this in our next blog but basically this is reviewing or rewriting your content to ensure your targeted keywords are contained in relevant places throughout your site and content.

If you need help conducting your keyword analysis, Web Design High Wycombe can help. Our internet marketing and SEO packages also include paid ads that can see your ad appear on page one of Google for 30 days for a fixed cost, for the keywords that rank.

Part 4: What is Content Optimisation?

The process of content optimisation ensures web content is written with your target audience in mind. Use your keyword research to optimise the content within your website with the relevant words and phrases. Additionally create relevant meta descriptions, title tags and links to help your SEO campaign succeed. (We will talk about these in more depth next time).



Content Optimisation

Optimising the content contained within your website will help your website perform in search engines. The point in this being to enhance visibility and increase traffic to your website.

Here are some key aspects of content optimisation:

Blogging

Use your [blog](#) as a chance to speak to your audience. To educate, entertain and get them enthused by the subject you are tackling. Answer their questions with high quality, well researched answers. Such content will not only help you become renowned as an expert in your field, it will also help you rank well in search engines.

Answer the public is an excellent resource to establish the questions people are asking search engines about subjects within your industry.

Get your Message Across

Communicate with your audience using simple language. Avoid techy talk (industry jargon)! Your target audience need to understand the message you are trying to convey.

- Stick to the point
- Answer the question
- Avoid boring your audience
- Educate, empathise, entertain and enthuse
- Ensure your message adds value

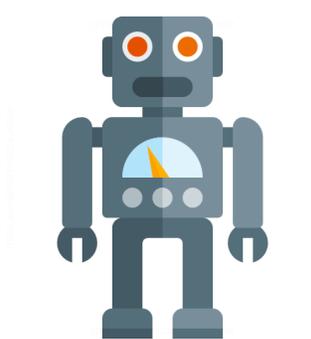
Link it

Link to reputable sites to back up facts and findings that reiterate key points within your content. This not only validates your expertise but helps your audience to see you as a well-researched authority on the matter.

Link from within your site too. Find relevant content that you've posted before. Link to offerings and services that benefit the end reader. Anything that keeps a user on your site is beneficial for your brand.

Optimise for Search Engines (SEO)

Add keywords to your content that your target audience is likely to use to search for your services. Add these naturally without over-stuffing.



Write for humans, not for robots.

Optimise meta descriptions and title tags using the keywords you've previously researched. This information appears in search results so make it catchy to ensure your target audience click on your result.

Visual Content

Visual content should not affect the loading speed of the page or take ages to load itself. It should be tagged with the relevant 'alt text' and be related to the message you are relaying in your

content. Original images and videos are always a bonus and will set you above competitors who recycle others visual content.

Formatting

There are many formatting techniques you can implement to make your text easier to read, here are a few suggestions:

- Make sure your text is easy to read.
- Avoid text heavy chunks of information.
- Use H1, H2, and H3 tags for headings to show breaks in content and differentiate between sections. Use bold and italics to highlight important words and ideas.
- Break information up with bullet points and lists.
- Ensure adequate spacing between paragraph to improve readability.
- Always ensure the copy you publish is grammatically correct with words correctly spelt.
- Avoid duplicating content from your site (and others!).

Call to Action

To convert visitors into customers it's important to use 'call to actions'. This basically lets the reader know what steps to take next. A few things you could try include:

- Wording e.g. get in touch
- Request comments or questions
- Request a quote
- Follow on social media
- Pop up forms
- Banners/buttons



Always remember that sharing is caring... to market your content it needs to be accessible. And, social media provides the opportunity to spread knowledge across multiple platforms. So, encourage your audience to share.

If you find an article useful...

- Post to Facebook
- Use Twitter to tweet it
- Share on LinkedIn

- And other social media platforms...

You can include the article in company newsletters and across your team (encouraging them to post to personal social media profiles). You can also share with industry contacts, influencers and bloggers. The list is endless, with the internet offering a wealth of possibilities.

Content optimisation is a very important process. It ensures you not only rank but that you hit your target audience with information they need. While entertaining and encouraging them (to mention your business, to recommend your blog, to sign up, to contact, to purchase etc) to engage with your business.

Part 5: Understanding HTML Tags

HTML is the language/code your website is written in. Don't worry, you don't need to have coding knowledge to make your SEO campaign work for you. There are Content Management Systems (CMS) that make managing HTML Tags a simple process.

HTML Tags for SEO

So, let's look at what HTML tags are needed for to ensure your content ranks. Each page of content should have:



Title Tags

- A title tag refers to the HTML name of a web page.
- The title of your content should use keywords relevant to the page. It should be concise and use no more than 60 characters.
- Search engines and your target audience use the title to understand what your content is about.

Meta Description

- A meta description is an HTML tag that summarises the content of a web page. This information is shown on the search engine's results page (SERP).
- Keywords relevant to your article should be specified in your meta description.
- Make sure your meta description catches the attention of your target audience as it is the first thing they will read of your content.
- A meta description should use no more than 160 characters.

Header Tags (H1 – H6)

- Header tags are used for headings and sub-headings within your content.
- H1 is the most important header tag and should include your content relevant keywords/phrase once.
- Only use one H1 header per page of content.
- An H1 header should not exceed 60 characters.
- H2 and H3 are far less important but usage of these can see you rewarded by Google's algorithms.

Slug

- A slug is part of your URL that uses your keywords to identify the page content.
- It comes at the end of the URL after the domain name.

Image Alt Tags

- An image Alt Tag simply put is a title for your image. This is usually a description of the image or details what the image represents.
- The Alt Tag appears in the image box when it is not possible to display the image.
- Alt Tags improve accessibility for users that might be visually impaired using a screen reader.

Additionally, it is important to remember to write for your audience and not for search engines. Hammering out text full of keywords and phrases will not keep your target audience hanging around for long.

Your keywords and phrases should only make up to 3% of your content. Google can penalise you for overstuffing content with keywords. Search engines typically like lengthy, in-depth content, which means pages of content should contain both words (a minimum of 400 words) and pictures.

Part 6: Is your Website User Friendly?

What makes a Website User Friendly?

Good usability can help your website rank. Keeping your website simple and intuitive can see your website succeed in its purpose and not just with your target audience, but also in search engines.

A few examples of what makes a website more user friendly include:

- Intuitive navigation
- A well laid out site
- Reasonable load time
- Content that informs, educates and entertains
- Avoid using duplicate content
- Well laid out visuals that illustrate your point
- Good use of tag-lines within content
- No broken links
- Call to Actions
- Simple functionality
- Responsive sites

Responsive Web Design

Responsive web design allows users to view a website as it should be seen across any device, be it a desktop, tablet or mobile phone. This is seen as an essential attribute for websites today and Google algorithms will prioritise responsive websites accordingly.

There are additional things that need to be taken into consideration when designing for the mobile audience – text needs to be readable and button sizes need to be adjustable, there's also a need to avoid Flash content, which can prove problematic to view on some devices and slow to load on others.



Page Load Times

Web pages should typically take no longer than 3 seconds to load. Google rewards sites in their rankings if pages load quickly. Your target audience are also likely to stay within your site if pages load well.

Keeping the load time down means avoiding extremely large images and videos or placing too many adverts within your pages. Your choice of theme for your website can also impact the speed of page load times, so try and keep it light. You also need to ensure your website hosting is appropriate for the size of your website.



SSL Certificates

Having HTTPS at the start of your URL tells your audience that your website is secure. If purchases are made through your site it will also provide added peace of mind. Installing an SSL certificate can ensure your site is secure and trustworthy. In turn Google will award points that can help you rank higher.

Sitemap

A sitemap details all the pages contained within your website. Sitemaps help search engines understand its structure and identify all the pages within your site.

A sitemap helps search engines crawl your website. Crawling takes place in order to index your content within search engines. That is why content needs to be optimised for SEO, otherwise it won't rank.

Part 7: Is your Website SEO Friendly?

Here we aim to summarise what you can do to make your website SEO friendly.

A website that is SEO friendly, simply put, is a site where search engines can easily 'crawl'. That is to navigate the content and structure to categorise and index.

SEO Friendly Websites

Websites that are SEO friendly have:

1. Unique Titles & Meta Descriptions

Each page should have a title that concisely describes the content of the page. This should not exceed 60 characters.

Each page should have a Meta Description that describes the content of the page using the keywords you have identified as specific to your business and target audience. This should not exceed 160 characters.

2. Well Formatted URLs

URLs should be simple but descriptive and relevant to the content of the page. Each word should be written in lower case letters and separated by dashes.

3. Fast Load Times

Pages of your website should take no longer than 3 seconds to load. Avoiding large image and video files can help keep load times down, but it also helps to ensure your hosting is sufficient for the size of your website.



4. Unique Content

Content should not be copied or duplicated from anywhere else across the internet. Duplicate content is penalised and will be detrimental to your search engine ranking.

5. Optimised Content

If you have conducted extensive keyword research to ensure you are targeting your audience sufficiently, you should ensure your text and images make use of these keywords and phrases. Do not over stuff your text, keywords should make up no more than 3% of your page content. Always remember to write for people not for robots.

6. Well-Structured Pages

Well-structured pages ensure it is not only easy for your audience to navigate but also for search-bots to crawl in the process of indexing your site. Sub-headings should be formatted using the H tags and used to break up large chunks of text. Remember to include hyper-links to relevant internal and external content that supports your content.

7. Responsive Design

A responsive site is a site that can display across a range of device sizes and benefits your search engine ranking.

Remember the purpose of an SEO friendly website is to ensure search engines understand your website and can adequately rank your site based on the content contained within it. Keeping the content cleanly structured, with the ability to educate, entertain and enthrall your target audience will keep both users and search engines happy.

A well ranked website is far more likely to gain organic traffic than those further down the ranks. So taking time to understand SEO can prove hugely beneficial in your businesses marketing campaign.

If your business needs help with their SEO and internet marketing, the professional team at Web Design High Wycombe, based in Buckinghamshire are here to help. Call us for a chat now on 01494 356 778.