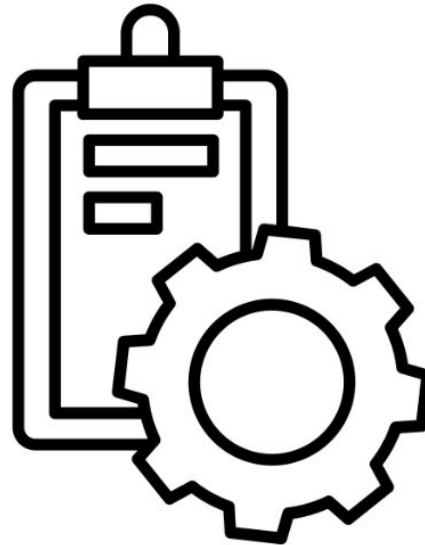Visit WILLIAMSBURG

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Marketing Webinar Series:
SEO Fundamentals

Agenda

- Introduction to SEO

- Covering SEO best practices:
  - Content strategies
  - Technical strategies
  - Local SEO strategies

- Questions

SEO at a Glance

- SEO stands for **Search Engine Optimization**.

- In a nutshell, SEO is the process of making sure a website appears as high as possible in search engine results pages (SERPs) when people search for keywords related to your business, product, or service. This is achieved by optimizing various elements of a website such as its content, metadata, site architecture, and links, in a way that search engines can easily crawl and understand.

- Get your scuba gear on, folks, we're taking a deeper dive…
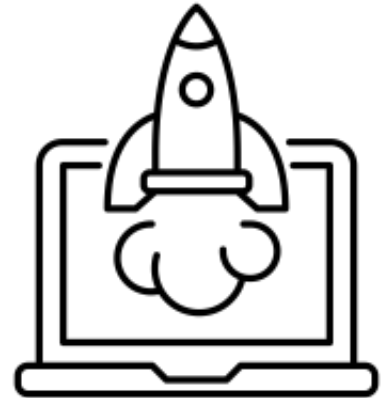
SEO Close Up

- SEO casts a rather wide net.

- It is firmly situated in both content and technical strategies/fixes.

SEO & Content

SEO & Content

- As you'll see in umpteen articles (perhaps you already have), content is king when it comes to SEO. It is a massive driver of results across the board. Your site content directly impacts your rankings in search results on multiple levels. A site's content also determines how engaged users are when they arrive on the site.

- Let's take a look at some content best practices in greater detail…
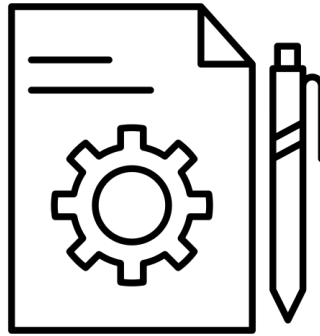
Keyword Research

- Keyword research is the foundation upon which you build a majority of your SEO strategies.

- The number keywords you target can fluctuate depending on your industry and specific needs, but it's good to aim for roughly 150 target keywords for a healthy list. Try your best to target keywords with a high search volume as well. **Search volume** is the number of searches your chosen keyword gets in a month.

- You can utilize a few tools to help with keyword discovery and ideation, such as SEMrush and Google Search Console. There is also a great, free extension for Chrome called Surfer SEO that can help you get a rough estimate of keyword volume as you casually search terms on Google.

Metadata Optimization

- So what is metadata? Metadata is comprised of your meta title and meta description. Let's take a closer look at what these are:

  - A meta title is the hyperlinked text displayed on search engine results and your browser tab to indicate the topic of a webpage. It's best to keep these within 60 characters and to try to use a target keyword within the meta title. Depending on the page, including a target keyword in a meta title can be difficult.

  - A meta description is the text displayed beneath your meta title in search engine results. This is essentially your window pitch to users on what the page is about. You have a bit more real estate here with a 160 character limit. This makes it easier to include target keywords within your description and greater increase your chances of ranking for said keyword.

Metadata Examples

Visit Williamsburg
https://www.visitwilliamsburg.com › things-to-do › muse...

Top Attractions Williamsburg VA & Things To Do
Discover the top attractions that Virginia has to offer at Visit **Williamsburg**. Tour historical sites, theme parks, and more! Plan your trip now.

Visit Williamsburg
https://www.visitwilliamsburg.com › food-and-drink › di...

Dining in Williamsburg, VA
Eat your way through fabulous **dining in Williamsburg**, VA. With eateries spanning from refined to eclectic, we have options for even the pickiest palettes.

Alt Text

- An often overlooked aspect of SEO is alt text. Alt text is the written description of an image that appears in place of an image on a webpage if the image fails to load.

- Alt text helps search engines better understand what an image is about. This can help increase the chances of your site's image appearing in image search results.

- Alt text is extremely straightforward. Essentially, just describe the image exactly as it looks. If the image is of a woman sitting on a park bench eating ice cream, the alt text would quite literally be "a woman sitting on a park bench eating ice cream". If you can fit a keyword in, absolutely do so.

Content Optimization

- Content optimization is a huge part of SEO. While a large bulk of this process is centered around optimizing older content on a site, it involves generating new content as well.

- "Content Optimization" as a process step is a relatively broad term. It involves quite a few aspects! Let's lay them out below:
  - Addressing duplicate content.
  - Ensuring content structure.
  - Getting keywords into the content in a way that feels natural and useful.
  - Developing a process for content creation where keywords are considered prior to generating new content.

Addressing Duplicate Content

- Duplicate content can be present on a few fronts on a website. These areas include:
    - Metadata
    - Page headers
    - Page copy

- For the most part, duplicate content is present on extremely similar pages where site owners aren't considering the fact that metadata can't be an exact match. It needs to be unique for each individual page, even if the change is slight.

- If the duplicate content is present in page headers and the page copy itself, it requires work to amend copy to get rid of the dings on the website for duplicate content.

Ensuring Proper Content Structure

- The structure of your content also has implications for SEO. Content structure includes using headings and subheadings to break up content into logical sections, using bullet points and numbered lists to highlight key points, and including images and videos to enhance the user experience. Proper heading structure helps search engines understand your content better.

- When it comes to heading structure, keep these tips in mind:
  - Ensure pages start with an H1. This should happen automatically upon giving the page a title, but outliers occur here and there. *Example: Greatest Superheroes of All Time*
  - Subheadings that serve as major points should be structured as an H2. *Example: Spiderman, Batman, Wolverine, Storm*
  - H3's serve as the subheadings to the subheadings. This content helps support your H2's. *Example: Strong leadership, Phenomenal Powers, Desire to Protect*

10 Essential Things to Do on Your First-time Visit to Williamsburg

Mar. 29, 2024

From the fascinating beginnings of our nation's history to thrills at Busch Gardens and chills on a twilight ghost tour, Williamsburg, VA, has a lot to offer visitors. The only challenge? Figuring out which things to do, where to eat, and the best activities for a first-time trip. Here are the top 10 "must-sees" to get started.

1. Live in Colonial Times

Eighteenth-century **Colonial Williamsburg** isn't the place you visited in fourth grade. The world's largest living history museum brings the past to life with costumed re-enactors weaving tales (and fabric), whittling, woodworking, and engaging with visitors all along Duke of Gloucester Street. Against the clop of horse-drawn carriages and the cheer of fife and drums, discover what life was like for the average colonist in the 18th century before touring the opulent Governor's Palace and nearby art museums. Discover the two-century-old Bray School that is no longer hidden in plain sight on the William & Mary campus. One of the earliest institutions dedicated to Black education in North America is undergoing restoration that complements ongoing excavation at First Baptist Church. There, visitors can discover one of the country's earliest African American congregations, which was founded both by enslaved and free Black worshipers.

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Getting Keywords into Site Content

- More often than not, desired target keywords aren't found within site copy. At least not to a degree that is beneficial for SEO. Therefore, we recommend you implement strategies to ensure those keywords are tastefully included on the website. This effort is two-fold.

- For previously published content, consider the following:
  - When it comes to core pages, as in the pages that prop up the website, choose one keyword from the target keyword list for each page. Once keywords have been assigned to target pages, optimize each page's content for it's target keyword. No core page should share a keyword with another.
  - Blog content is more of a free for all, since multiple blogs can target the same keyword. This is because blog content is supplemental.

- For new content, we recommend you determine priority keywords prior to the writing of content so they can be woven throughout content as it's written.

Technical SEO

Site Speed & Architecture

- Site Speed Optimization
    - Site speed is a ranking factor, which means search engines take the performance of your site into consideration when ranking sites in search engine results.

    - A simple way to optimize for pagespeed is compressing your images. Compressing your images will keep image quality intact while reducing their size and therefore helping image heavy pages load faster.

- Site Architecture
    - A well organized site structure can help search engines crawl your site with ease. This includes using clear and descriptive URLs, implementing a logical hierarchy of pages, and avoiding duplicate content.
    - Example of a good URL: www.example.com/category-page/name-of-page
    - Example of a bad URL: www.example.com/bug.php?id=6366&edit=1

Mobile Optimization

- Seeing as a large portion of search engine users peruse the web on their mobile devices, ensuring your website is optimized for a mobile experience is a key factor in ranking well in SERPs. Consider the following:

- **Google's Mobile-First Indexing:** Google predominantly uses the mobile version of the content for indexing and ranking. A mobile-optimized site ensures better visibility and ranking in search results.

- **Improved User Experience:** A mobile-friendly site provides a better experience for users on mobile devices, leading to lower bounce rates and higher engagement, which positively affects SEO.

- **Faster Load Times:** Mobile optimization often includes performance improvements, resulting in faster load times. Speed is a significant ranking factor for search engines.

Security & Data

- Website Security
  - Website security is crucial for both user trust and ensuring you rank well in SERPs. Implementing an SSL certificate, using strong passwords, and regularly updating software can improve a website's security. An SSL certificate is a digital certificate that authenticates a website's identity and enables an encrypted connection. You can tell a website has one if there's a little lock icon next to the URL in the search bar. Another way of telling is if the URL starts with https:// instead of http://.

- Structured Data
  - Structured data is a way to provide additional information to search engines about the content on a website. This can include details about products, events, and recipes. This can help improve search engine visibility and click-through rates.

Crawling & Indexing

- Ensuring that search engines can crawl and index a website properly is critical for search engine visibility.

  - **Avoiding crawl errors and broken links.** Redirecting 404 pages is crucial to any SEO strategy as it keeps the user experience flowing and doesn't break any of your internal links.

Local SEO

What is Local SEO?

- **Definition:** Local SEO focuses on optimizing a website to be found in local search results.

- **Purpose:** Helps businesses promote their products and services to local customers at the exact time they're looking for them online.

Key Components of Local SEO

- Google Business Profile
  - Create and optimize a Google Business Profile (formerly Google My Business).
  - Include accurate business information: name, address, phone number, and business hours.
  - Add photos, respond to reviews, and update posts regularly to engage customers.

- Local Citations
  - List your business in local directories and websites (e.g., Yelp, Yellow Pages).
  - Ensure consistency in business information across all platforms.

- On-Page SEO
  - Optimize website content for local keywords (e.g., "best pizza in [your city]").
  - Include your city or region in meta tags, titles, and content.
  - Add a map and your business address on your contact page.

Key Components of Local SEO

- Reviews & Ratings
    - Encourage customers to leave positive reviews on your GBP and other review sites.
    - Respond to all reviews, positive and negative, to show engagement and build trust.

- Local Link Building
    - Obtain backlinks (a link on someone else's website leading to your website) from other local businesses, local news websites, and community blogs.
    - Participate in local events and sponsorships to get mentioned on other local sites.

Benefits of Local SEO

- **Increased Online Visibility:** Helps your business appear in local search results and on Google Maps.

- **Attract Local Customers:** Targets potential customers in your geographic area.

- **Higher Conversion Rates**: Local searches often lead to higher conversion rates since users are actively looking for specific services or products.

Thank you