

The Ultimate Guide to SEO for Your Website

The essentials for optimizing your website to rank in search engine results.

This guide will walk you through:

- Understanding SEO concepts and fundamentals
- Why SEO is important for your business
- Conducting strategic keyword research
- Pros and cons of optimizing yourself vs. hiring an SEO expert

As a business owner, you understand an online presence is essential. But you might not know how a deliberate, focused web presence can become a powerful tool to achieve your company's goals.

If you already have a website but haven't seen the traffic or results you expected, it probably isn't search-engine optimized.

Search Engine Optimization (SEO) is how your website competes against the millions of other domains out there. It's not as impossible as it sounds. By understanding strategic keyword selection and monthly SEO reports, you'll get your company to the top of the Search Engine Results Page (SERP) and discover new lead generation from high-volume organic traffic.

This SEO guide will show you how to master SEO keyword research and website metrics. Use it to build a strategy to get your website to climb from page ten of search results to the top five.

When you master SEO, search engines will lead organic traffic to your website, presenting new opportunities for your business.

What is SEO?

Search Engine Optimization (SEO) has many facets, which can overwhelm novices at first. At its core, SEO makes your website the most appealing result for a search engine. By employing an array of SEO strategies, you'll edge out the competition when customers search for words and phrases related to your business.

The various aspects of SEO work together to create better user experiences on sites. By improving your Search Engine Results Page (SERP) ranking, you're generating high-quality, relevant content to enhance brand awareness.

To understand SEO, start by speaking the language of optimization.

Keywords and Phrases

These are the terms customers type into search bars to find information, goods, and services. They're anything from single words to complete sentences.

Short Tail or Head Terms

These are broad, three word or less, search terms like **kayaks** or **vegetable seeds**. It's unlikely your handmade kayak business or local nursery will rank for a short tail keyword. Even so, they're essential for SEO because they have the highest search volume.

Long Tail

Customers use longer search terms when they're close to making a purchase or looking for specific information. You're more likely to single-digit SERP rank with **touring ocean kayak sellers near me** or **organic heirloom pumpkin seed sellers**.

Backlinks

Backlinks (or **off-page SEO**) are when another website links to your site. It tells a search engine you have trustworthy information. There are many ways to backlink while increasing brand awareness:

- Creating high-value, shareable infographics.
- Mentioning influencers and partnering with other companies on social media.
- Guest blogging on other sites.

Think of backlinks as ranking websites vouching for your page to a search engine.

Search Engine Marketing

SEO doesn't have to cost money. But if you're interested in paying for advertising, Search Engine Marketing (SEM) is one way of doing it. It includes everything from social media ads to Google AdWords and pay-per-click advertising. SEM isn't technically SEO, but it is a way to ensure your website reaches a targeted audience.

Authority

SEO is more than keywords and content; it's about quality. The concept of **authority** is new but gaining relevance and should inform how you approach SEO for your website. Prospects, and therefore search engines, want websites to be:

Relevant: optimized content relates to the searched keyword.

Trustworthy: information is well-researched, accurate, and supported.

High-quality: content is informative, easy to read, and engaging.

Valuable: products, services, or information that prospects want or need.

Why does my business need SEO?

When's the last time you clicked through to the second page of results on an internet search you were conducting? A [quarter of web users](#) never click past the first page of search results.

SEO is your path to increased brand awareness and visibility to support your company's future growth. It generates organic leads, which convert 14.6% of the time (compared to 1.7% conversion from inorganic).

A third of search engine click-throughs are for the first result, and the *first five results* get 75% of all clicks. SEO is an effective, long-term strategy for becoming the top result for keywords related to your industry.

Search engines are your most important audience.

In business, you're often adjusting products and services to suit customers' wants better. You'll be using the same approach to your website and search engines. When a website's structure isn't appealing and accessible to a search engine, the site won't rank, regardless of content.

Common site errors include:

- Coding errors that will block your site from being noticed by search engines.
- Duplicate pages on your site with copied content.
- Disorganized site structure that's difficult for a search engine to crawl.

Once you understand SEO, you'll be able to structure every aspect of your site to enhance your SERP ranking instead of work against it.

Good SEO means good user experiences and high-quality content.

You could have the best handmade kayaks or heirloom pumpkin seeds on the internet, but if your website is confusing or slow to load, no one will ever know. Optimizing for search engines is, in effect, optimizing for your future customers.

Whether you're posting monthly blogs, YouTube tutorials, or a podcast about your field, you're becoming a credible source for information and insights into your industry. Increased brand awareness and brand loyalty go a long way to support your goals for the future.

Local SEO drives conversions.

If you have a brick-and-mortar business, local SEO lets you communicate with prospects. People are using mobile devices and voice search more than ever. By optimizing for your area, your handmade kayak business shows up when someone searches for kayak stores in their neighborhood, city, or state.

The power of SEO reports: using quantitative performance data.

Most SEO agencies provide you with a monthly report that gives you a snapshot of your search engine performance. If you're optimizing without expert support, there are free resources that let you build an SEO report yourself.

A report should show your website's performance with quantitative data. Understanding SEO metrics will help you adjust your strategy to see improved results and respond to customer interests.

Organic traffic translates to visibility and conversions.

Organic traffic is the number of people who searched for a keyword or phrase and click-through to your website. More traffic means more leads, more conversions, and a larger audience. Since organic traffic is the primary goal of SEO, if you don't see improvement each month, revisit your strategy.

Your **organic ranking** for your optimized keywords tells you where you turn up in search results. It can fluctuate over time, but - like traffic - you want to see improvement in SEO reports from month to month.

SEO raises your organic click-through rate.

With comprehensive SEO reports, you can see which pages rank highest on SERP and where site visitors spend most of their time on your website. You can use that information to refocus your SEO strategy on pages that are getting less traffic and improve your navigation to encourage a higher click-through rate.

If you're getting high traffic on your blog, for example, but not on product pages, increase your internal links and highlight featured items every month.

Control your bounce rate and see where visitors spend their time.

A high bounce rate on your home page can tank your SERP ranking. **Bounce** happens when people visit your site and then click back to the results page within seconds. A search engine will assume there's not valuable information for that search term on the page and drop its ranking. An attractive home page with straightforward navigation will engage prospects to spend time on your site.

Make sure your site is fast and accurate.

People want instant information. No matter how beautiful and engaging your site is, if it takes over three seconds to load, prospects won't stick around. Your monthly report will show you if you're not running at optimal speeds.

An excellent, high-ranking website delivers high-value information in a fast, accessible way.

Use SEO resources and reports that work for you.

There are plenty of reporting services out there, both free and paid, that will analyze your domain. Try different services until you find one (or a few) with relevant metrics shown in an easy-to-visualize way.

SEO is a long-term strategy that will reap significant benefits for your business with diligence and fine-tuning. Check your SEO report every month and re-optimize every few months.

Essentials of effective keyword research.

Now that you understand what SEO is and what it can do for your business, it's time to focus on your website's keywords.

Come up with topic buckets for your website, and fill them with keywords.

Topic buckets are related subjects to your business. They're every primary and secondary topic that your potential customers might search for when considering purchasing your product or service. These are the subjects that you'll cover on your

blog, social media posts, or podcasts. For your handmade kayak business, you might choose:

- Beginners kayaking
- Kayak camping
- Outdoor lifestyle
- Outdoor fitness
- Handcrafted outdoor gear

Come up with five to ten topic buckets to fill with keywords focusing on the various aspects of your business.

Research related search terms for your keywords.

There are two ways of doing keyword research for your website. With the first, you type keywords into a search engine. At the bottom of the results page are “related search terms.” Use this feature to build webs of related search terms within your topic buckets.

If you have many keywords in each of your buckets, single keyword searching can become tedious.

The second way of researching is by using a free keyword tool online. They’ll give you more results than individual internet searches.

Choose keywords for your SEO strategy.

Choosing keywords is where the artistry of SEO comes into play. It takes practice and constant refinement to find keywords that balance low competition and high search volume. Ranking on SERP is a long-term goal, and few domains find instant success.

- Think the way your customers do: optimize for focused searches, like **handmade wood kayaks near me** and general research, such as **the best kayaks for summer paddling**.
- Look at competitor sites: scroll through the web content of the top 5 results for your keywords. You may recognize long-tail keywords on your list and get ideas for new ones.
- Don’t avoid competitive keywords: you won’t rank for **kayaks for sale** right away, but incorporate it into a long-tail keyword where you will rank.

Think about how you’ll use your keywords as you’re selecting them—as blogs, product descriptions, on-site, or as meta descriptions.

Plan your content strategy using your keywords.

Your keywords should appear throughout all your content online, including:

- **Your web content:** your home page, services, products, and contact pages.
- **Meta content:** from URLs to meta descriptions and alt text for images.
- **Blog posts:** monthly or bi-monthly blog posts highlighting a single keyword.
- **Social media:** your updates, photo captions, and bios.

There's no one-and-done with SEO; regular posts and deliberate keywords are key to future clients and customers finding your site.

How to optimize and rank on SERP.

Once you have your topic buckets filled with keywords, it's time to place them into content across your platforms and start climbing the SERP ranks.

Getting your business found on Google and other search engines.

Remember that SEO is a marathon, not a sprint. By working at it every month, you can expect substantial results in a year, tracked with monthly SEO reports.

Titles

Every page of your website has a title that appears on the SERP. They're limited to 70 characters, should have a keyword, and be accurate and descriptive. Use | or – to restrict filler words (and, the, or) and don't overstuff with keywords.

Content

Select two or three keywords for every page of your website to focus on optimizing. Crawl bots are wary of sites overburdened with keywords and unnatural language, so use them with discretion. Aim for 2% to 4% of the content to be SEO.

Links

You now know that external links to your site from ranking websites act as an endorsement, but they're not the only links that matter. **Internal links** (between your domain pages) and **external links** (to other websites) communicate what your website is about to search engines.

Meta Descriptions

These 150 character blurbs appear below the title of a page on the SERP. They should use keywords without overburdening the content. Think of these as ad copy to attract prospects from the SERP to your website. Make them punchy and descriptive.

Consistent Posting

Did you know Google can tell how old the content on your web pages is? Search engines want to provide users with current information. Stale websites rank lower than those that post fresh content to their domain with consistency.

Blog posts featuring keywords in the content, page title, and meta description help improve your ranking.

After optimization: understanding the search engine “crawl.”

Search engines keep tabs on millions of websites, ranking them in order of relevance to user searches. Every search engine has different criteria determining how they “crawl” through these sites, cataloging, and ranking.

All the SEO in the world won't do your business any good if there's a catastrophic error in your page that prevents a search engine from even finding it.

Some typical reasons a site isn't ranking or is slipping rank:

- Issues with domain registration
- The structure of your domain or pages
- 404 errors
- Connection timeout errors

Using a tool like Google Search Console allows you to see potential errors before they hurt your ranking. That said, it requires expertise to troubleshoot the variety of problems that can affect a new or recently updated website.

How to get Google and other search engines to crawl and rank your site.

If you're encountering errors on Google Search Console or aren't seeing the results you expect from your SEO strategy, all is not lost. Experts use an array of techniques to communicate a page's relevance and authority to search engines:

- **Create a mobile-friendly site:** you'll reach a wider audience by making it easy to browse your site from a device.

- **Consistent, new content:** the more you publish content like blogs and podcasts, the more bots will crawl the new pages.
- **Backlinks by other websites:** when other ranking sites link to your content, crawl bots will recognize your page as a trusted authority.
- **Minimize on-page resources:** unoptimized pictures, JavaScript, and CSS slow down crawl, and load-speeds on mobile.
- **Eliminate duplicate content:** search bots see redundancies, even in meta descriptions, as less valuable than novel content.

It can take a lot of time and experience to optimize a website for a great user experience and crawl bot recognition. For business owners without time to devote to their web ranking, B12 can handle SEO strategy, website indexing, and troubleshoot crawl errors.

Work with B12 experts for a complete SEO strategy and SERP rank results.

SEO is the most powerful web tool you have at your disposal as a business owner. It builds a vibrant online presence, increases brand awareness, generates organic traffic and leads, and drives traffic to your eCommerce.

By now, you should realize that your website is never “done.” It’s a dynamic part of your business that requires monthly check-ins and constant updating to keep it working for you.

Hopefully, you’ve also come to see the potential that comes from a prime SERP position. Understanding SEO expands possibilities, from branded content on a podcast or blog to exciting partnerships. It empowers you to become more responsive to how your audience uses your services and products.

It’s also a lot for a business owner to take on:

- Developing topic buckets
- Researching keywords
- Generating new content every month
- Gathering metrics for monthly SEO reports
- Making actionable strategies based on those reports
- Monitoring your crawl score and troubleshooting page errors

Many companies opt for developing in-house digital marketing positions or working with freelancers. Both come with substantial costs that aren't always workable for small businesses and new startups.

B12 offers an alternative. We use AI to generate crawl-ready, mobile-friendly websites fast, so our services are more affordable than the competition. Our clients get custom SEO strategy development and execution, maintained by experts.

You can take advantage of the full capabilities of a strong web presence without spending hours studying SEO and months tweaking your strategy. B12 optimizes your site to conquer the SERP, so you can focus on crushing your next business goals.