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SEO TOOLKIT FOR START UP BUSINESSES

SEO

SEO (SEARCH ENGINE
OPTIMISATION) IS THE PROCESS
OF MAKING YOUR WEBSITE
APPEAR MORE OFTEN IN SEARCH
ENGINE RESULTS PAGES (SERPS)

CONTENTS

# INTRODUCTION

TO SEO

A BRIEF INTRODUCTION TO SEO

SEO (search engine optimisation) is the process of making your website appear more often in search engine results pages (SERPs).

If someone is searching on Google, Yahoo or Bing for something you do or sell, then it's about maximising the chance of that person finding you as opposed to one of your competitors.

SEO may seem daunting at first, but elements of it are actually quite simple once you get the hang of things. This beginner's guide will help you get to grips with the basics of SEO. We'll cover all of the important aspects, including keyword research, content creation, link building and more.

WHY DOES MY BUSINESS NEED SEO?

Presence in SERPs can be achieved either through organic rankings or via Pay-per-click (PPC) advertising. Paid adverts appear above, below and to the side of organic search listings.
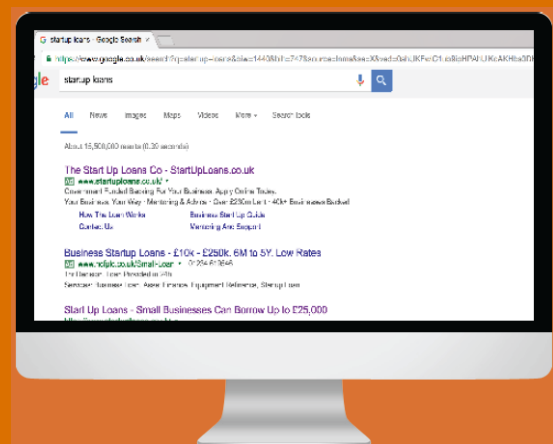
Ranking in search engines organically essentially provides you with free advertising, as opposed to paying for your listings to be seen. Another advantage is that your SERP listings will appear 24/7, giving you huge traffic-driving potential in comparison to paid ads.

70% USERS IGNORE PAID ADS

In addition, organic listings attract the most attention. Approximately 70% of links that search engine users click on are from organic search results. 70-80% of users typically ignore paid ads in Google and focus on the organic listings.

As you can see, organic rankings provide a very lucrative opportunity to promote your business.

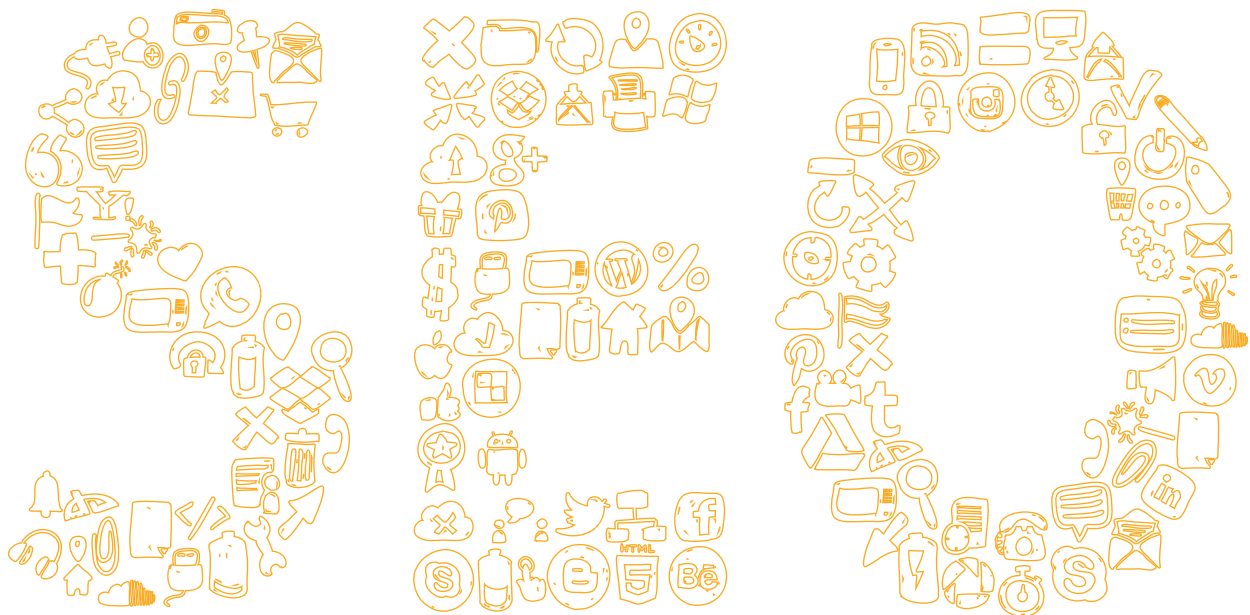**SEO TOOLKIT** FOR START UP **BUSINESSES**

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KEYWORDS

KEYWORDS

SEO begins with discovering specific phrases your prospective website visitors are actually looking for.

This can be discovered through keyword research. You can then design your website to maximise its chances of appearing in SERPs for keywords that users search for most often.

In SEO, there are different types of keywords: Primary keywords and "long tail" keywords.

Primary keywords are shorter and more generic phrases while long-tail keywords are longer phrases containing three words or more.

EXAMPLE	PRIMARY: Starting a Business LONG-TAIL: Starting a Business with No Money

When choosing keywords to target, it's best to select a mix of primary and long-tail keywords. Long-tail keywords usually have lower search volumes but are easier to rank for. They are less broad than primary keywords making them more likely to convert.

By targeting a combination of primary and long-tail keywords, you'll have a strong keyword strategy that includes long-term goals and short-term wins.

KEYWORDS

DISCOVERING KEYWORD OPPORTUNITIES

How can you tell what people are searching for in the first place?
There are various free and paid tools that can be used to discover keywords.

Some excellent tools for beginners are described below:

1 | GOOGLE KEYWORD PLANNER

The Google Keyword Tool is the best place to start for beginners. Type in a keyword and the tool will display related phrases along with their average monthly search volumes. This gives you a clear indication of which topics and phrases people are most interested in. It also shows you which phrases have the highest traffic potential.

🌐 GOOGLE KEYWORD PLANNER
https://adwords.google.co.uk/KeywordPlanner
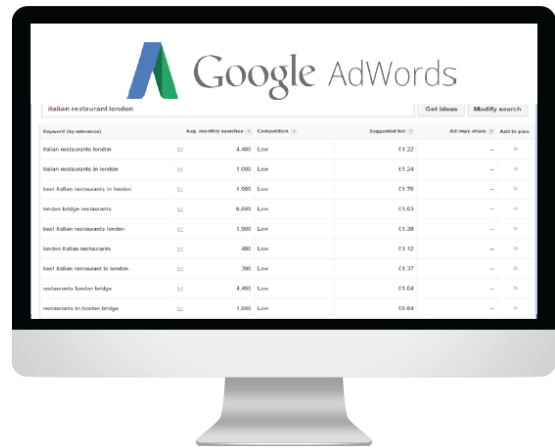
2 | ANSWERTHEPUBLIC.COM

Answer the Public is excellent for discovering long-tail keywords. It takes your keyword and prefaces it with prepositions like "how", "with", "near", "like" etc. and provides a huge list of relevant phrases that users search for regularly.

🌐 ANSWERTHEPUBLIC.COM
http://answerthepublic.com/
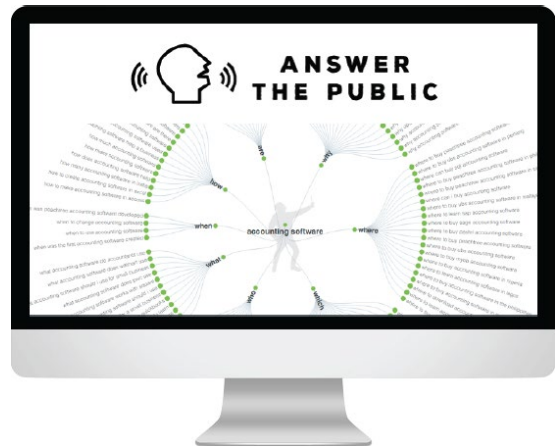
3 | KW FINDER

Keyword finder takes keyword research one step further by displaying a difficulty score. For your given keyword, it calculates the strength of competing websites and gives you a score out of 100 for how difficult it would be to gain top rankings. An excellent tool for beginners. Free and paid versions are available.

🌐 KW FINDER.COM
https://kwfinder.com/

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KEYWORDS

KEYWORDS AND SITE STRUCTURE

Keyword research should play an integral part in determining how you structure the pages on your website.

<table>
<tr><td>EXAMPLE</td><td>If you sell running shoes, you can find out which type of running shoes people search for most often.</td></tr>
</table>

According to the Google Keyword tool, many people are interested in these types of running shoes:

Keyword	Monthly Search Volume
Lightweight running shoes	720
Stability running shoes	720
Barefoot running shoes	2400
Waterproof running shoes	720

Knowing that lots of people search for the above types of running shoes, it would be wise to create separate pages for each of them.

Note that if a page on your site were to rank for "lightweight running shoes", it would likely also rank for variant keywords such as "lightweight shoes for running". Choose your primary keyword based on search volumes and competition, but expect many secondary keywords to rank as a by-product.

SELECTING THE RIGHT KEYWORDS

You should prioritise your target keywords based on the following factors:

Search Volumes: Are enough people searching for the keywords to make it worthwhile to target?

User Intent: Is it a 'buyer' keyword that is likely to trigger conversions? Or is it somebody simply searching for information? Keywords with higher conversion potential should be prioritised.

Competition: How strong are the websites currently on the front page? KW Finder can be used to gauge keyword difficulty levels.

Relevance: Are users likely to stay on your website after clicking your search result listing? Going after irrelevant terms because they have high search volume will not be beneficial.

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KEYWORDS

KEYWORD OPTIMISING A WEB-PAGE

Once you've selected your target keyword(s), your content must be optimised correctly. Your keyword must appear in certain page elements so search engines can understand what your page is about.

A perfectly optimised page will contain the following:

1	**KEYWORD IN TITLE TAG**

Title tags are used in SERPs to display preview snippets for a given page. They are one of the most important SEO factors. The closer your keyword is to the start of your title tag, the more weight it will have with search engines. Most content management systems such as Wordpress will automatically use your page's title as your title tag.

2	**KEYWORD IN THE URL**

Keyword rich URLs tend to rank better in search engines. You should avoid ugly URLs, example:

🌐 **www.mywebsite.com/10/05/16/category/posttitle**

Your URL should be well structured and include your target keyword:

🌐 **www.mywebsite.com/target-keyword**

3	**KEYWORD IN <H1> TAG**

An <h1> tag is an HTML code wrapped around a heading within a page. Including your target keyword in heading tags improves its ranking potential. Check your site's code to ensure headings are contained with <h1> tags.

This is displayed as follows in the HTML code:

`<h1>Solicitors in London</h1>`

4	**KEYWORD IN IMAGE ALT TEXT**

If your web-page contains an image, you can assign it alt text (alternative text) to define the nature or content of the image. This will look as follows in your site's HTML code:

🌐 **<img src="http://www.example.com/example.png" alt="Keyword">**

5	**KEYWORD IN FIRST 100 WORDS**

The target keyword should appear within the first 100 words of the page.

FURTHER READING

For a further understanding of keyword research, and for more advice on using the keyword tools, check out these free online guides:

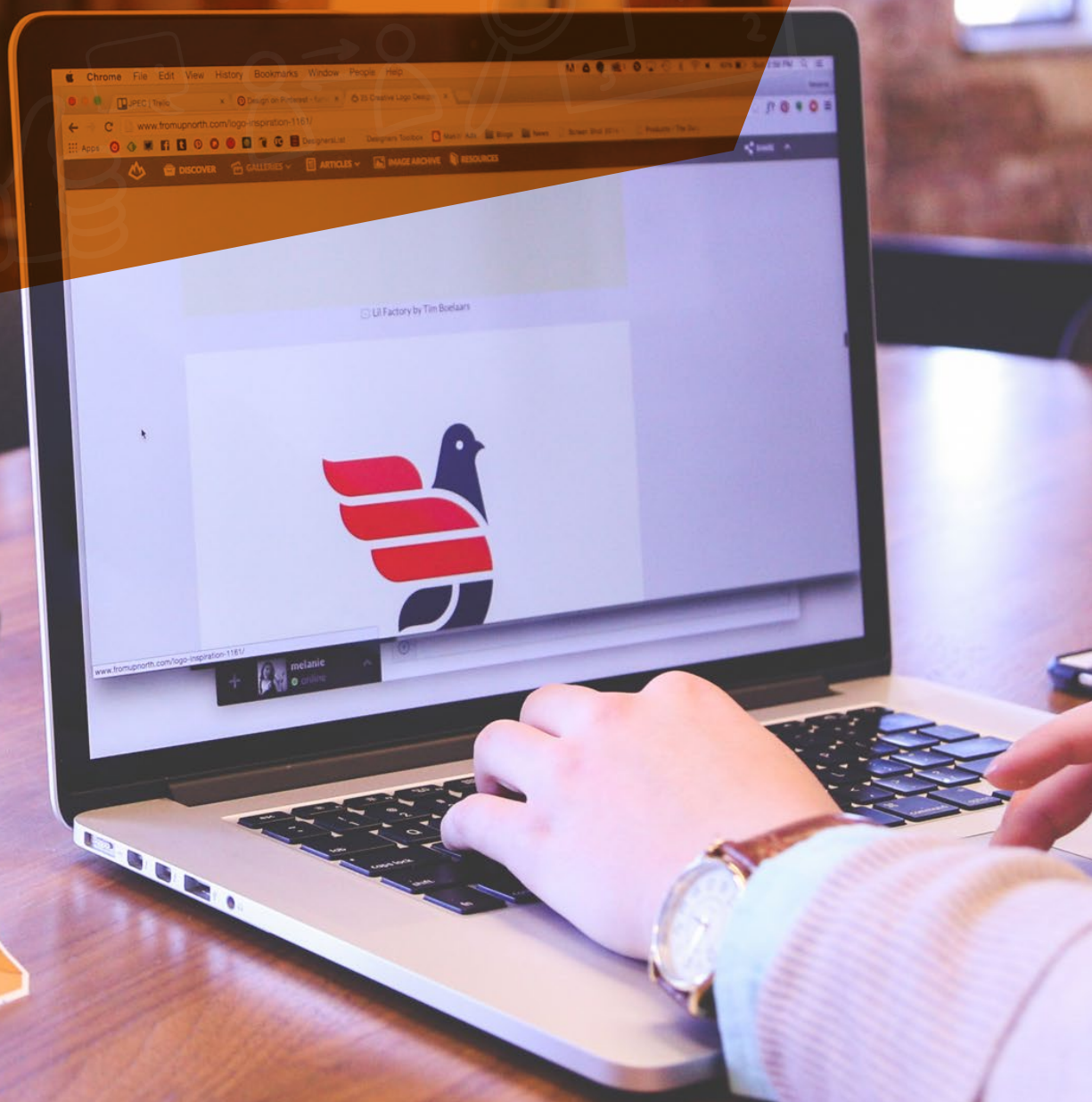HELPFUL TOOLS FOR IDENTIFYING THE RIGHT KEYWORDS – HUBSPOT
www.blog.hubspot.com/blog/tabid/6307/bid/22842/4-Helpful-Tools-for-Identifying-the-Right-Keywords.aspx

THE MOZ BEGINNERS GUIDE TO SEO – MOZ
www.moz.com/beginners-guide-to-seo/keyword-research

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CONTENT
CREATION

CONTENT CREATION

Hopefully by this point you will have gained a better understanding of the keywords that are available to you.

Think of content creation as the online marketing side of your business - how will you use relevant keywords to direct traffic to your website?

Some of the most popular methods are:
- **Blogs**
- **Landing pages**
- **Infographics**
- **Visuals, including graphs and 'how to' guides**

INCLUDE A BLOG SECTION ON YOUR WEBSITE

Blog posts are one of the most effective ways of directing traffic to your website, providing their target pages have been mapped for relevant keywords. They are a great way to gain traffic from long-tail keywords. Long-tail keywords can even provide the ideas for your blog posts.

EXAMPLE	The long-tail keyword "Who needs stability running shoes" offers a great blog post topic along with the chance to promote stability running shoes within the content.

LANDING PAGES

A landing page is any page where a visitor could 'arrive' into your website. Most websites will have a number of different landing pages.

In the case of a shoe shop, SEO landing pages could run into the thousands and include:
- The homepage (optimised for 'Online Shoe Shop' or 'Buy Shoes Online')
- Category pages (e.g. an 'ankle boots' page and a 'running shoes' page)
- Sub category pages (e.g. 'black ankle boots')
- Brand pages (e.g. 'Faith Shoes,' or 'Women's Skechers')
- Product Pages (e.g. 'Faith ankle boot in black with chelsea heel')

Similar to your blog, landing pages provide the perfect opportunity to map your site for primary and long tail keywords
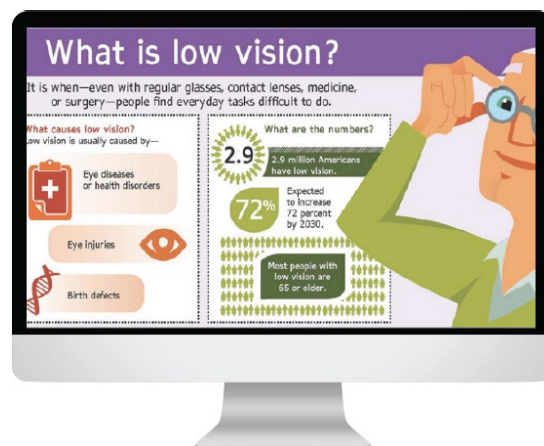
The objective is for a user to find your site by searching a certain keyword or search query.

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CONTENT CREATION

INFOGRAPHICS AND VISUALS

If you have access to a designer, you may want to talk to them about designing a visual graphic or infographic to feature on your site.

Infographics allow factual information to be displayed in a fun, visually pleasing and easy-to-digest fashion.

EXAMPLE	Now let's use the example of our shoe shop.

You may want to create an infographic that explains how to choose the right running shoe.

If someone is looking for advice on picking out a running shoe, it indicates that they might be in the market to make a purchase soon. So although they're only researching at this stage, if you can bring them to your site and provide them with high quality information, you put yourself in the running to win them as a customer when they come to make that purchase.

A quick look on AnswerThePublic.com will show whether or not "how to choose the right running shoes" is a search that someone has made. From there, you may decide to do some keyword research around the queries about choosing running shoes using the keyword tools.

You can quickly see how a clever content creation strategy can improve your website's search ranking, online visibility and conversion rate.

It's as simple as that. However, there are a few golden rules to bear in mind.

CONTENT CREATION

CONTENT CREATION GOLDEN RULES

☑ All online content should have a goal and meet the needs of its audience.

☑ Decipher which pages you want to rank for each keyword, there is little point in optimising six different pages for the same keyword.

☑ Optimise each individual page for a particular keyword or subject – e.g. men's shoes, women's shoes and children's shoes.

☑ Regularly update and refresh your online content. Scheduling weekly blog posts can be a great way of keeping your online content fresh and relevant.

FURTHER READING

There are numerous resources out there to help you get a better understanding of what constitutes an effective content campaign, take a look at these free guides to help you:

🌐 UNDERSTANDING YOUR AUDIENCE - GOOGLE WEBMASTER TOOLS
support.google.com/webmasters/answer/6001093

🌐 CREATING GREAT CONTENT – KISSMETRICS/ENTREPRENEUR
blog.kissmetrics.com/ingredients-of-great-content/
https://www.entrepreneur.com/article/223752

🌐 CREATING A CONTENT INFOGRAPHIC - COPYBLOGGER
www.copyblogger.com/create-content-infographic

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ON-SITE
FOUNDATIONS

ON-SITE FOUNDATIONS

Another vital part of SEO is getting the on-site foundations of your website right. When we say "on-site," (or "on page") we refer to factors on your website itself.

On-site optimisation is very much the tidying up phase of your website from a technical and structural perspective and making sure Google can actually find it! To explain this further, we'll break the process into four key areas.

The Four Key Areas of On-Site Optimisation
These factors, in many cases, may need the input of your web developer. It's important that these elements are in place because they are critical to your SEO success:

1. Indexation and crawling
2. Internal linking and structure
3. Content structure
4. Site speed

1. INDEXATION AND CRAWLING

This is all about making sure your site can actually be crawled and indexed by Google. Or, in other words, that Google can access your website, can navigate around your website and can add your website's pages to its index of the web. In order to do this there are three key elements to address:

- Search engines begin by looking for a 'robots.txt' file for your website. This file tells the search engines which pages they should exclude in their review (crawl) and indexing. You can read more about creating a robots.txt file on:
  https://support.google.com/webmasters/answer/6062608

- In order to tell search engines which pages they should include in their crawling and indexing, you will need to create an XML sitemap. You can read more about creating an XML sitemap on:
 https://support.google.com/webmasters/answer/156184

- You will need to register your website with Google Search Console, verify your website and then upload your XML sitemap. You can learn more about this process here:
  https://support.google.com/webmasters/answer/35179

2. SITE STRUCTURE

It's important to ensure that your website has a logical structure and that both search engines and human users can access all the required parts of it. In other words, it's about making sure the website has a sensible navigation. So, for example, if you have a shoe shop it would make sense that you might have a main menu along the top of the site with links to categories and subcategories. Products would then be linked to from within those categories and sub categories.
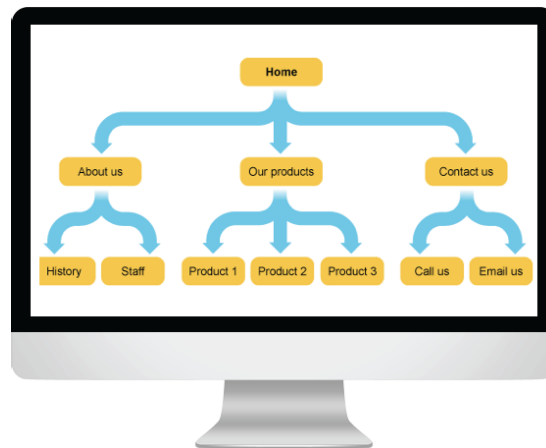
3. INTERNAL LINKS

Internal links can help a user navigate between various pages on your website, without leaving it.

Take a look at your homepage, or another website if you haven't created one yet and test how easy it is to navigate from the homepage to the 'about' page or blog. Is there an internal link taking you from one page to another? Do you have to click the 'back' button on your browser every time you want to return to the previous page? Internal links also indicate a good user experience to the search engines and can help to establish a hierarchy on your website – you'd expect the home page to come out on top, due to it being most users' first port of call. Internal links, placed at appropriate points within content, can encourage users to spend longer on your website.

For businesses and SMEs, the other main benefit of a good internal linking structure is that you can prompt a user to visit a web page where they may wish to make a sale.

EXAMPLE

Let's take an online clothing store, you may find a link on the men's page that looks something like this:

"Looking for more style advice and expert tips? Why not check our style blog (internal link)?"

You as a business owner will want to keep a user on your website for as long as possible. Internal links make it easier to direct traffic from one page to another.

4. SITE SPEED

Google confirmed that the speed at which your website loads for users is a consideration from an SEO perspective and therefore, if your website takes too long to load, not only may your customers decide to go elsewhere, but Google will likely rank your website lower.

Increasing site speed often involves technical changes and input from a developer, though if you are running a site on a popular content management system like Wordpress there are plugins to help that already exist.

FURTHER READING AND TOOLS

There's a lot more reading available that offers greater detail on the areas we have covered above:

🌐 GOOGLE WEBMASTERS
https://www.google.com/webmasters

🌐 MOZ - GUIDE TO SEO
https://moz.com/beginners-guide-to-seo

For those using Wordpress websites, there are plugins that will help to manage things like page titles and site speed:

🌐 YOAST SEO TOOL
https://yoast.com/wordpress/plugins/seo/

🌐 HELP WITH WEBSITE SPEED
https://wordpress.org/plugins/speed-booster-pack/

Google has a tool to assist in assessing and improving site speed:

🌐 GOOGLE PAGE SPEED INSIGHTS
https://developers.google.com/speed/pagespeed/insights/

BACKLINKS

BACKLINKS

WHAT ARE BACKLINKS?

To put it simply, backlinks are links from other websites to your company's website.

Receiving a link from another website is akin to receiving a "vote". The more votes you receive, the more likely you are to rank high in search engines.

However, not all links are created equal, and some can actually harm your site's ranking potential. Building a healthy link profile is crucial to improving your search engine rankings.

TYPES OF LINKS (GOOD AND BAD)

1	EDITORIAL

The best type of link you can receive is a natural editorial link. This essentially means that another webmaster has discovered your content and thought it was worthy of sharing. They may have included a link to your content in one of their blog posts or on a resources page. If you are a well known authority in your industry and have produced great content, you will gain lots of natural editorial links.

However, relying on natural mentions is often not sustainable for many businesses. Manual "outreach" is usually required to inform webmasters about your content and encourage them to share it. Creation of content in the form of surveys, whitepapers (free downloadable documents) and infographics is very useful for this purpose.

2	NON-EDITORIAL

Most of these are generally low quality and even harmful at times. Types of links that fall into this category include:

• Non-moderated web directories
• Press releases with optimised anchor text
• Advertorials
• Forum signatures
• User profile pages
• Article directories
• Link exchanges

For more detail on the types of links you should avoid, have a read through Google's Quality Guidelines: https://support.google.com/webmasters/answer/66356?hl=en.

BACKLINKS

LINK BUILDING TACTICS

To build a healthy link profile, it would be wise to use the following tactics:

CONTENT BASED LINK BUILDING

This involves creating pieces of content in the hope of earning links to them from people who find them entertaining, interesting, informative etc. You then contact these people and encourage them to share the content. The type of content you could create includes whitepapers, videos, how-to guides, images and infographics.

Moneysupermarket.com produced a fun infographic about the cost of being Batman. This visual was picked up and shared by the likes of Gizmodo and The Daily Mirror.

GUEST POSTING

This involves approaching webmasters and bloggers and asking if you can contribute an article to their site. You would then include a link back to your own site within the article.

Guest posting must be approached with caution, as many bloggers have low quality guidelines and will only publish guest posts if they are compensated with money. This has lead to many people buying links en masse in order to gain high search rankings. For this reason, Google has cracked down on this form of link-buildling. Paying for links is against Google's guidelines and thus is not recommended.

When seeking guest post opportunities, be sure to look for sites with strict quality guidelines that are highly relevant to your industry.

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BACKLINKS

LINK BUILDING TACTICS

To build a healthy link profile, it would be wise to use the following tactics:

RESOURCES PAGES

Many websites contain Links or Resources pages where they link to recommended websites. These can be found quite easily with a search query like "keyword" + inURL:links. If your website is relevant enough, you may be able to convince the webmaster to add it to his/her list. This is a way of searching for resources pages by returning a list of website pages which are relevant for the keyword you searched for and contain the word 'links' in the url.
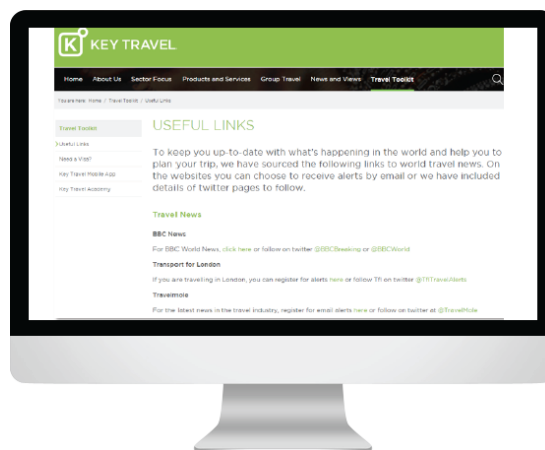
UNLINKED BRAND MENTIONS

Sometimes it is common for other websites to write about your brand without including a link to your website. Writing to the webmaster and asking them to include a link to your site will often be successful. Mention.com and Google Alerts are good tools for finding out where your site has been mentioned.

FURTHER READING

To understand the history of link building and how Google has changed, you can read

🌐 **MOZ.COM**
https://moz.com/

To understand the history of link building and how Google has changed, you can read

🌐 **WWW.LINKBUILDINGBOOK.COM**
http://www.linkbuildingbook.com/

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OFF PAGE TIPS FOR YOUR

BUSINESS

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OFF PAGE TIPS FOR YOUR BUSINESS

We've spoken at length about improving your SEO ranking via your website, but what about the things that you can do 'off page' to ensure your brand is successful online?

GOOGLE MY BUSINESS

It's worthwhile creating a 'My Business' profile on Google so that people can easily find a description, reviews and your company contact information. 'Google My Business' (https://www.google.com/business/) is essentially an online listings directory and you can set up a profile for
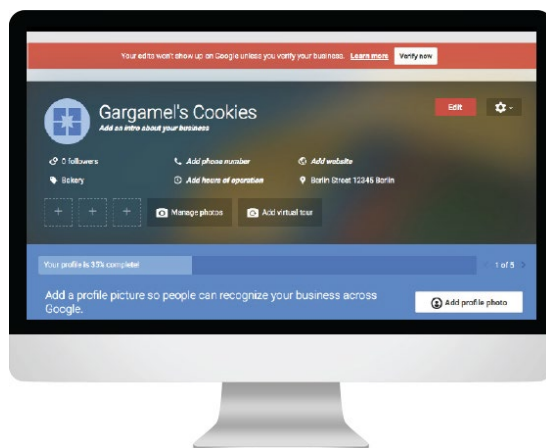
SECURING YOUR COMPANY'S SOCIAL MEDIA HANDLES

You've optimised your site for keywords, you've signed up to Google's My Business service, now it's time to get set up on social media – if you haven't already.

The main social media sites are:
- LinkedIn: https://gb.linkedin.com/
- Facebook: https://en-gb.facebook.com/
- Twitter: https://twitter.com
- Youtube: https://www.youtube.com

However, you may decide to sign up to some of the newer video centric sites to promote your business, such as Vine, Snapchat and Periscope.

There are numerous guides and tips on the Internet about utilising each social media platform, including this useful guide from Hootsuite: https://blog.hootsuite.com/how-to-set-up-a-social-media-profile/

Your social media handle could be your business name, or an acronym of your business name, as long as it's instantly recognisable and relates to your business.

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USEFUL SEO RESOURCES FOR FURTHER READING

There are numerous resources on the Internet to help you gain a better understanding of SEO, including resources from Google, Moz, Search Engine Land and the Search Engine Journal:

GOOGLE DIGITAL GARAGE
www.digitalgarage.withgoogle.com/

GOOGLE SEARCH CONSOLE COURSE
support.google.com/webmasters/answer/6023933

SEARCH ENGINE LAND
searchengineland.com/

MOZ BLOG
www.moz.com/blog

SEARCH ENGINE WATCH
www.searchenginewatch.com/

SEARCH ENGINE JOURNAL
https://www.searchenginejournal.com/

THE SEM POST
www.thesempost.com/

INBOUND.ORG
inbound.org/

WHITEBOARD FRIDAY
www.moz.com/blog/category/whiteboard-friday

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START UP LOANS: FINANCE AND SUPPORT FOR YOUR BUSINESS

The Start Up Loans scheme is a Government-backed initiative, created to help support start up business owners to access the funding and support they need in order to start or grow their own business in the UK.

Since its launch in 2012, the scheme has provided over £300 million of funding and supported over 45,000 great business ideas.

Read below for more information about the scheme.

- ✓ Borrow £500 – £25,000
- ✓ Fixed interest rate of 6% p.a.
- ✓ 1 - 5 year loan repayment term
- ✓ Unsecured, personal loan for business purposes
- ✓ Free application support

- ✓ Free post-loan support and mentoring
- ✓ Free templates and guides
- ✓ No application or set-up fees
- ✓ No early repayment fees
- ✓ Exclusive business offers

"Mentoring was a brilliant element to the loan itself. Having a mentor through the start up process really helped."

David O'Neal, Shortcuts Children's Salon

"Start Up Loans give you the cash and the business support to make it work, it's a complete package that can't be beaten."

Meriel Kehoe, Claudi & Fin

Ready to get started?

Register your interest today by visiting our website **www.startuploans.co.uk** and completing our short online form.

Looking for more information?

For more information about the Start Up Loans scheme, please visit our website or call our Customer Service team.

Web: www.startuploans.co.uk
Tel: 0344 264 2600 (Monday to Friday, 9am to 6pm, excluding bank holidays).

Loans are strictly for 18s and over. Personal loans for business use only. Finance is subject to status. Terms and conditions apply.

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T: 0344 264 2600
(Mon to Fri 9.00am-6.00pm)

www.startuploans.co.uk