

What IT Marketers Need to Know about SEO

A guide for technology companies



CTOsOnTheMove

What IT Marketers Need to Know About SEO: a comprehensive guide for technology companies



Before we start, a word of caution... the two worst mistakes people make with SEO are:

- 1) running before learning to walk – i.e. grappling at advanced SEO strategies before the basics are covered; and
- 2) moving to the “dark side” – i.e. employing unscrupulous SEO advisors and following their tactics:



Now that we got the most important items out of the way, let's talk definitions.

Search Engine Optimization (SEO): The process of making a site and its content highly relevant for both search engines and searchers (via [Search Engine Watch](#)).

In this ebook we will cover Basic Site Optimization, Keyword strategy, On-page and off-page optimization, link building, analytics and how to make sure your site is not impacted by Panda, Penguin and other Google updates.

Basic Site Optimization: On-Page

Here are the following tactics of on-page SEO :

1. The Meta Keywords, Description and Robots tag — Google takes your description copy to show off your site in the search results, so treat this as your optimized sales copy. Make sure your sitemap.xml is automatically updated once you make changes to your website.
2. The Title Tag – This is still the most critical element of on-page SEO, so make sure that it reflects the purpose and contents of the page, as well as contains keywords that you want to the page to rank for.
3. The Body Text - The first sentence in the body text and the first words used per sentence are the most vital ones for advanced on-page SEO necessities
4. The URL — The subdirectory folder and page of content should be SEO optimized (for example, <http://domain.com/cloud-hosting/cloud-hosting-best-practices.com> would get a high ranking for a page dedicated to cloud hosting – especially if it is also backed by highly authoritative, relevant, deep in-bound links)
5. The H1 and H2 tags – They show the search engine the main subjects and Table of Contents for the content to be indexed. Include your keywords in these.
6. Same Site Link Texts — The links connecting the pages of your site together must have your targeted keyword terms in them as well as all links throughout the site — even though it seems excessive, having variations to your targeted keywords would also help when linking out to other pages within your site.
7. Outbound Link Text — Resources you link to also must be optimized – If you are a CRM provider and are linking to an email marketing company (email marketing software in this instance), you would use “Put your internet marketing on auto-pilot and use the best tool for internet marketers today – [internet marketing email software](#).”
8. IMG Alt Tags — Google search is all about text. The only way (at least for now) it can make sense of images is by “IMG Alt tags”. Think of this as subtitles.

Your images should be described via ALT Tags with the keywords you are optimizing for – If your image is hosted on your web-host, the file name of the

images should also be SEO'd — If you have an image about polar bears have it be polar-bear.jpg in your images folder.

9. Keyword Density — 8% is excellent and doesn't seem spammy, if you have a 500 word article, then 40 of those words should have variances of the search term you are targeting, if this seems excessive, lower the keyword density down to 5% and you will only need to add 25 variances/instances of your keyword.

A simple rule of thumb here: if your text looks “off” to an average human reader, then you are probably doing it too much.



Basic Site Optimization: Off-Page

Note: These things have to be done after the completion of on-page SEO. Before doing these things you must be aware of your competitors who can able build a negative reputation against your company/website.

1. Community Creation in Social Networking Sites

Also known as online reputation management, this is the first and foremost step with which you have to initiate your process. Become a member of the most popular social networking sites like LinkedIn, Twitter, Facebook and create a profile of your own.

2. Blogging

This is one of the most powerful ways to promote your company/website online. Write a blog of your own for your company/website and include lots of unique content. Be precise in what you're trying to convey for the users in your blog entry and promote your blog in blog directories and blog search engines.

You can also promote your blog/website by posting comments in other service-related blogs which allow links in the comments section that are crawlable by the search engines (these blogs are commonly identified as Do-Follow Blogs).

If you're not very good at writing content for blog posts, hire a guest blogger for your blog and ask him/her to write precise and unique content so that your blog can gain more credit from a search engine point of view.

3. Forum Postings

Create a forum/online discussion board of your own and start a discussion or share topics with your friends. You can also post/reply to a thread in other service-related pre-existing forums that allow links in your signature which can be crawled by the search engines (aka "Do-Follow Forums").

4. Search Engine Submission

Submit your website to the most popular search engines like Google, Yahoo, get listed for free.

5. Link Baiting

Suppose you have copied/published another website's news or content in your blog/website. Don't forget to place their website link as a reference. Do it for others and, if your content is trustworthy, let others do it for you. This is another way to increase your link popularity.

6. Cross-Linking

Link to internal pages within your site wherever necessary (this is commonly termed Internal Linking). This increases your internal link popularity, which is another major factor of Google Page Rank algorithm.

The best known example of successful internal linking is Wikipedia. Also try to get a content link from websites/blogs that are related to your site theme. Try getting a link from within their site content using a targeted keyword as anchor text (much like Wikipedia does).

7. Video Promotions

Like with photo sharing, you can publish/share your product videos, expert opinions, and reviews of your product and make them public in YouTube, Metacafe, Dailymotion, etc.

8. Business Reviews

Write reviews about others businesses or ask your friends/clients to write a review of your business in major business review sites like RateitAll, Stylefeeder, and others.

9. Press Release Promotion

core business, purpose, goals and customers. So when it comes down to it, it is all about building your relevancy for whatever keywords you want people to find you for. A successful SEO campaign will use an effective set of keywords that have been selected through diligent research and proven to be the most beneficial to the organization.

Types of Keywords

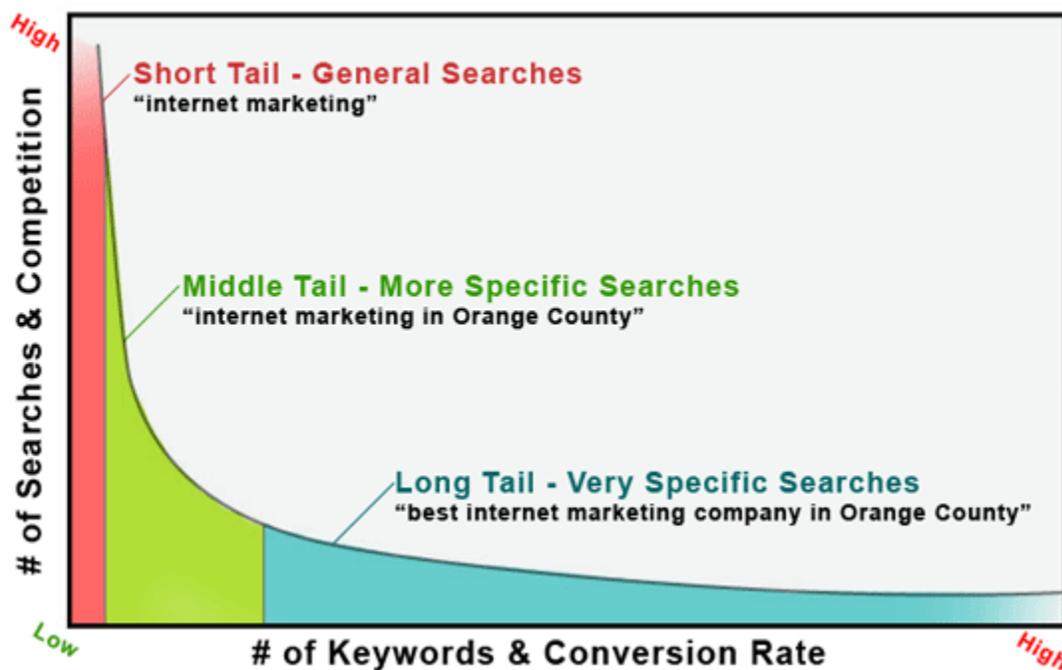
Keywords can come in the form of a single word or be as long as a six word phrase or more. Studies show that keyword searches for 2 – 4 word phrases have the highest average conversion rate (ie. users ended up purchasing an item, filled out a form or contacted the company).

The reason being longer phrases are more specific and focused so the searcher generally knows what they want. However, phrases even longer than four words can still have a lot of value.

With that being said, keywords can be categorized into 3 main types of keyword searches:

1. Short Tail Keywords
2. Middle Tail Keywords
3. Long Tail Keywords

Short Tail vs. Middle Tail vs. Long Tail Keywords



Short Tail Keywords

The most popular types of search terms fall into the “short tail” or the front of the search distribution graph shown above.

This area consists of a small number of high-frequency, or highly searched, keywords that are more general in context.

These more popular keywords are typically more competitive to rank for because they are usually also the more obvious search terms. Short tail keywords are considered the “root” or base to more specific keyword searches.

Below are a few examples of keyword searches that might fall within the short tail:

- *Cell phone*
- *Credit card*
- *Health insurance*

Middle Tail Keywords

The middle tail portion of the keyword distribution graph accounts for keywords that are slightly more specific than the far more general or obvious short tail keywords.

These middle tail keyword phrases consist of the “root” and the “modifier”. Keyword modifiers are what focus the general short tail keyword into a more specific middle tail and long tail keyword phrase.

Below are a few examples of the short tail keywords converted into more specific middle tail keywords:

- *Best cell phone manufacturer*
- *Cheap credit card with miles*
- *Health insurance for self employed*

Long Tail Keywords

The long tail consists of a significantly larger number of low-frequency keywords that are less popular but also less competitive to rank for.

These outliers usually have many modifiers to make them even longer and more specific phrases than those in the short and middle tails. They get their name because they create the illusion of the tail in the search distribution graph shown above.

Below are a few examples of the middle tail keywords converted into even more specific long tail keywords:

- *Where can I find a used Apple iPhone 4s smartphone?*
- *Cheap credit card with miles high credit limit and low fees*

- *Cheap health insurance for self employed including vision and dental and low deductibles*

Building an Effective Keyword Strategy

As you can see, there can potentially be thousands of keyword phrases that would be suitable to your business. However, unless you have an army of resources, it is important to focus your SEO marketing efforts on the most effective keywords to your business.

So, how would we define an “effective” keyword? For one, an effective keyword is one that connects searchers with the most relevant results. On the business side, effective keywords are the ones that drive the most qualified traffic, or potential customers, to your website.

Building an effective keyword strategy means allocating your time and effort to the keywords that mean the most to your business. Short tail keyword roots will probably have much higher search volume but be significantly more competitive, which makes attaining higher rankings much more difficult.

Middle and long tail keyword phrases may not individually have as much search volume but because they account for such a large portion of all search you can attract more overall traffic than in the short tail.

This strategy allows us to go actively after the low hanging fruit (short-term goal) but still build our brand and relevance for the higher hanging fruit (long-term goal).

Every industry is different but we are pretty confident that this sort of approach just about applies to any website. It’s easy to get lost in focusing solely on the overly competitive keywords that fall within the upper echelon of the short tail search. Diversify your efforts and focus on building your keyword foundation first and you’ll have a better chance at attaining those high search volume keywords.



Your Link-building Masterplan

For search engines that crawl the web, links are the streets between pages. Using sophisticated link analysis, the engines can discover how pages are related to each other and in what ways.

Since the late 1990's search engines have used links as votes - representing the democracy of the web's opinion about what pages are valuable and popular. The engines themselves have refined the use of link data to a fine art, and complex algorithms create nuance evaluations of sites and pages based on this information.

Link Building Basics

Link building is an art. It's almost always the most challenging part of an SEO's job, but also the one most critical to success.

Link building requires creativity, hustle, and often, a budget. No two link building campaigns are the same, and the way you choose to build links depends as much upon your website as it does your personality. Below are three basic types of link acquisition.

- "Natural" Editorial Links

Links that are given naturally by sites and pages that want to link to your content or company. These links require no specific action from the SEO, other than the creation of worthy material (great content) and the ability to create awareness about it.

- Manual "Outreach" Link Building

The SEO creates these links by emailing bloggers for links, submitting sites to directories, or paying for listings of any kind. The SEO often creates a value proposition by explaining to the link target why creating the link is in their best interest.

Examples include filling out forms for submissions to a website award program or convincing a professor that your resource is worthy of inclusion on the public syllabus.

- Self-Created, Non-Editorial

Hundreds of thousands of websites offer any visitor the opportunity to create links through guest book signings, forum signatures, blog comments, or user profiles. These links offer the lowest value, but can, in aggregate, still have an impact for some sites.

In general, search engines continue to devalue most of these types of links, and have been known to penalize sites that pursue these links aggressively. Today, these types of links are often considered spammy and should be pursued with caution.

Some of the link-building strategies

Get your customers to link to you.

- If you have partners you work with regularly or loyal customers that love your brand, you can use this to your advantage by sending out partnership badges - graphic icons that link back to your site (like Google often does with their Adwords certification program). Just as you'd get customers wearing your t-shirts or sporting your bumper stickers, links are the best way to accomplish the same feat on the web.

Build a company blog. Make it a valuable, informative and entertaining resource.

- This content and link building strategy is so popular and valuable that it's one of the few recommended personally by the engineers at Google . Blogs have the unique ability to contribute fresh material on a consistent basis, participate in conversations across the web, and earn listings and links from other blogs, including blogrolls and blog directories.

Create content that inspires viral sharing and natural linking

- In the SEO world, we often call this "linkbait." Users who see it once want to share it with friends, and bloggers/tech-savvy webmasters who see it will often do so through links. This high quality, editorially earned votes are invaluable to building trust, authority, and rankings potential

Be newsworthy.

- Earning the attention of the press, bloggers and news media is an effective, time honored way to earn links. Sometimes this is as simple as giving away something for free, releasing a great new product, or stating something controversial.



SEO Analytics

Although every business is unique and every website has different metrics that matter, the following list is nearly universal. Note that we're only covering those metrics critical to SEO - optimizing for the search engines.

As a result, more general metrics may not be included.

Every month, it's critical to keep track of the contribution of each traffic source for your site. These include:

- **Direct Navigation:** Typed in traffic, bookmarks, email links without tracking codes, etc.
- **Referral Traffic:** From links across the web or in trackable email, promotion & branding campaign links
- **Search Traffic:** Queries that sent traffic from any major or minor web search engine

Knowing both the percentage and exact numbers will help you identify weaknesses and serve as a comparison over time for trend data.

For example, if you see that traffic has spiked dramatically but it comes from referral links with low relevance, it's not time to get excited. On the other hand, if search engine traffic falls dramatically, you may be in trouble.

You should use this data to track your marketing efforts and plan your traffic acquisition efforts.

Three major engines make up 95%+ of all search traffic in the US - Google and the Yahoo-Bing alliance. For most countries outside the US 80%+ of search traffic comes solely from Google (with a few notable exceptions including both Russia and China.)

Measuring the contribution of your search traffic from each engine is critical for several reasons:

Compare Performance vs. Market Share

By tracking not only search engines broadly, but by country, you'll be able to see exactly the contribution level of each engine in accordance with its estimated market share.

Keep in mind that in sectors like technology and Internet services, demand is likely to be higher on Google (given its younger, more tech-savvy demographic) than in areas like cooking, sports or real estate.

Get Visibility Into Potential Drops

If your search traffic should drop significantly at any point, knowing the relative and exact contributions from each engine will be essential to diagnosing the issue. If all the engines drop off equally, the problem is almost certainly one of accessibility.

If Google drops while the others remain at previous levels, it's more likely to be a penalty or devaluation of your SEO efforts by that singular engine.

Uncover Strategic Value

It's very likely that some efforts you undertake in SEO will have greater positive results on some engines than others.

For example, we frequently notice that on-page optimization tactics like better keyword inclusion and targeting has more benefit with Bing & Yahoo! than Google, while gaining specific anchor text links from a large number of domains has a more positive impact on Google than the others.

If you can identify the tactics that are having success with one engine, you'll better know how to focus your efforts.

The keywords that send traffic are another important piece of your analytics pie. You'll want to keep track of these on a regular basis to help identify new trends in keyword demand, gauge your performance on key terms and find terms that are bringing significant traffic that you're potentially under optimized for.

You may also find value in tracking search referral counts for terms outside the "top" terms/phrases - those that are important and valuable to your business. If the trend lines are pointing in the wrong direction, you know efforts need to be undertaken to course correct.



Staying ahead: what you need to know about Penguin and Panda search algorithm updates:

Panda Update – penalty for “thin content”, content farms are punished, high ad-to-content ratio punished, content quality and uniqueness.

Penguin Update – penalty for overuse of anchor text, keyword-stuffed anchor text

What you can do to avoid penalty:

1. Create content for the searcher, not for the search engine
2. Don't bother with spammy links
3. Social media and inbound is the new SEO
4. Natural is the new mantra
 - a. A spike in links is unnatural
 - b. Too many keywords would be unnatural
 - c. Too many ads, too little content
 - d. Only low PR links: spammer
 - e. Only high PR links: link buyer
 - f. Identical anchor text is not natural
 - g. Links from different domains but from the same IP are not natural
 - h. Diversity of website types providing links: blogs, forums, directories, articles – is important

To prevent your site from being impacted by Google updates:

- i. Come up with original, great content that is worth sharing, linking to, commenting on.
- j. Promote your content on social networks.

Your Tools of Trade for B2B SEO:



Keyword Research

1. Google Keyword Tool

<https://adwords.google.com/o/KeywordTool>

Great tool from Google which is completely free. Predominantly used to get keyword ideas for setting up PPC campaigns. Great for finding popular keywords to target. Make sure you are logged in to your Google Account, select exact match and choose the appropriate location and language.

2. Uber Suggest

<http://ubersuggest.org/>

This scraper tool that returns keyword ideas based on Google Suggest and other suggest services. Pretty cool tool that allows you to get keyword ideas based on a seed keyword. Not only great for keyword discovery but awesome to get content ideas from.

3. SEM Rush

<http://www.semrush.com/>

If you ever want to know what keywords your competitors are ranking well for, this is a brilliant tool. All you need to do is enter a URL, pick the search engine and country, you will get a list of keywords ranking in the top 20. It even has historical trending data to see how rankings have improved over a period of time. A tool worth subscribing to!

Technical Audit

4. Screaming Frog

<http://www.screamingfrog.co.uk/seo-spider/>

This is an uber-super-duper tool that can help you uncover issues on a website. It crawls a website's links, images, CSS, script and apps. It allows you to easily identify any errors, duplicate content, canonical tags, redirects and the list goes on. The tool is free but has a restriction of 500 URI crawl limit. The paid version is only £99 a year.

5. Xenu Link Sleuth

<http://home.snafu.de/tilman/xenulink.html>

Before the existence of Screaming Frog, there was Xenu. They do almost the same thing. This tool has been around for ages. I use this together with Screaming Frog, export all data in to Excel and make sure that I cover all bases. Xenu can sometime pick up things that Screaming Frog does not – vice versa.

6. Google & Bing Webmaster Tools

www.google.com/webmasters/tools/ and www.bing.com/toolbox/webmaster

I login to GWT and BWT every single day. They both have extremely valuable information about a website's performance in the search engines. You can get information about the crawlability and indexability of a website. The new 'Index Status' report in GWT is awesome.

7. Web Developer Toolbar

<https://addons.mozilla.org/en-US/firefox/addon/web-developer/>

An awesome plugin for Firefox with features that easily lets you run quick tests on a website. Disable javascript and images with ease and see how the website functions.

8. Firebug

<http://getfirebug.com/>

Another Firefox plugin that I use religiously. I use it to check and troubleshoot code. I also love the Net Panel which monitors GET requests.

9. SEOMoz's SEO toolbar

<http://www.seomoz.org/seo-toolbar>

If you are not already using this amazing toolbar by SEOMoz, you are missing out big time. You have easy access to important SEO metric at a glance. Easily check the domain authority and page authority of web pages. My favourite feature is the 'Analyze Page' overlay – all the important things you will need in one interface. You can also easily check for dodgy cloaking using the user agent switcher.

10. SEO Browser

<http://www.seo-browser.com/>

As their tagline suggest “see your website like a Search Engine sees it”. If you sign up for an account with them, you get some pretty detailed information of any website you enter. It is a pretty clunky tool but has a lot of hidden gems.

Link Analysis & Tracking

11. Open Site Explorer

<http://www.opensiteexplorer.org/>

Another product by SEOMoz, OSE is probably the most popular link analysis tool. What I like with OSE most is the ability compare several websites side by side with a range of metrics such as domain authority, page authority, linking root domains, internal and external links, FB likes, FB shares, tweets and Google +1's. For \$99 per month, it is well worth it. You not only get access to OSE but their entire suite of tools including FollowerWonk which they acquired not too long ago.

12. Majestic SEO

<http://www.majesticseo.com/>

A link analysis tool that rivals Open Site Explorer. Majestic SEO's backlink history report is second to none. It is great to analyse how a website's link growth overtime. About 2 weeks ago, they announced that they moved from updating their index every day to updating every hour. This is a HUGE step.

13. Link Data from GWT and BWT

If you are investing majority of your time building links and authority to your website, you will want to monitor and make sure that these links are getting found by the engines. The 'Download Latest Links' feature in GWT is great. When Yahoo retired their Site Explorer tool, I was devastated! When Bing announced that they were bringing it back in to BWT, it was good news all around.

Reporting & Tracking

14. Advanced Web Ranking

<http://www.advancedwebranking.com/>

My favourite keyword ranking tracking tool, I have been using AWR since I started working full-time as a SEO. The tool has evolved so much over the years. What I like best about the tool is the ability to use proxies for faster crawling. You can setup whitelabelled reports, integrate with Google Analytics and most recently integration with SEOmoz's Linkscope database. The tool is extremely flexible and probably covers every single search engines anywhere in the world.

15. Google Analytics

<http://www.google.com.au/analytics/>

This is a no brainer! You got to track performance and make sure that all the on-site and off-site efforts are translating into traffic and conversions. I am a big fan of the dashboard functionality of GA. I have dashboards setup for myself, which contains more advanced metrics and dashboards setup specifically for clients where I make sure that I demonstrate metrics that show value of SEO.

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