

IMPROVING SEO RESULTS

**A Fast Start Checklist to review the key activities
needed to improve your SEO**

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Published: March 2014



Introduction

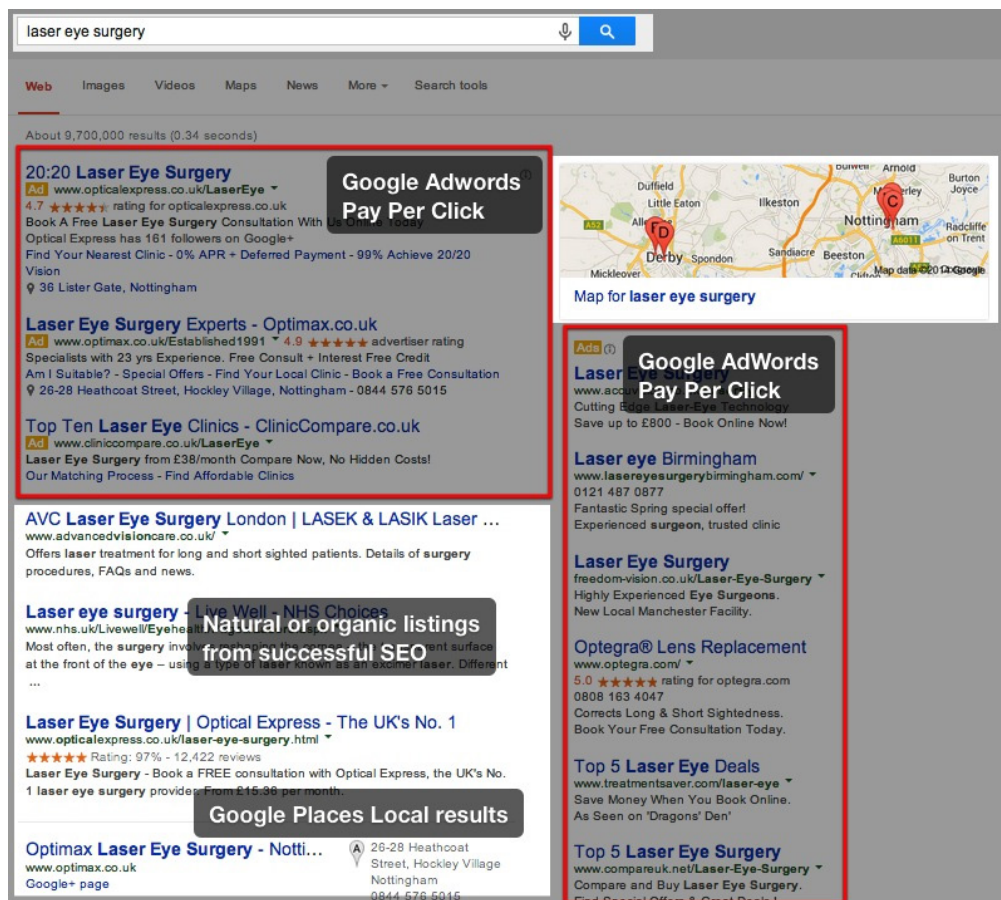
Improving SEO results

SEO still demands attention from businesses

Despite all the recent focus on content marketing and social media marketing, if executed well, SEO can still be a fantastic way to drive quality visitors who want to do business with you to your site. Some businesses and blogs can deliver well over half their traffic from SEO through their SEO mastery, or the strength of their brand.

SEO Essentials

SEO helps you increase visibility in the natural listings of the search engines shown in the example search below. It's about getting the organisation plus its products and services in front of searchers with a current defined need or intent.



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Since everyone who uses the web searches for products and services, you can't understate its importance. It can make or break a business, unless your brand is extremely well-known.

What is it? Search Engine Optimisation (SEO)

SEO is a proactive, structured approach used to improve the position of a company in the natural or organic results listings of search engines for the keyphrases you target. It's aim is to increase awareness and drive visits to a site from new prospects and existing customers.

SEO is a fantastic opportunity for marketers since we don't have to pay for the cost of AdWords, but you can see the challenge of SEO since, for this typical screen resolution, there are just 3 natural positions on the page compared to much more space devoted to paid AdWords listings. Many working in digital marketing believe this is a deliberate, commercial ploy by Google... However, you can see the importance of SEO to business from this research* which shows that the vast majority of searchers still click on the natural rather than paid listings.



Which ranking factors are important to help me get more visits from SEO?

To get the most from SEO you need to know which levers to pull will make the biggest difference to your rankings. That's what this Fast Start intends to show. We've outlined over 20 factors to review to help you improve your SEO with links through to more detailed guidance.

Sometimes it's still thought that what's most important is the keyphrases that you have on

* [Smart Insights: Comparison of Google clickthrough rates by position in different sectors](#)

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the page, known as on-page optimisation. But, as we'll see, it's the quality of the links to your site and within your site that has the biggest influence. This is based on the quality of your content, content marketing is a huge part of SEO.

We will see that the volume and frequency of social interactions with your content is also becoming more important in determining search ranking positions.

We hope you find this guide useful, do [contact us](#) with any questions.

If you're looking for more in-depth advice on SEO, Expert members of Smart Insights can download our other resources on SEO:

- ✓ [7 Steps to Successful SEO guide](#)
- ✓ [SEO audit template](#)
- ✓ [Video course and tutorial on SEO keyword analysis](#)

About Smart Insights

[Smart Insights](#) provides actionable marketing resources to help businesses succeed online. More than 60,000 Basic members use our blog, sample marketing templates and weekly Emarketing Essentials newsletter to follow best practices and keep up-to-date with the developments that matter in digital marketing.

Our Expert members use our planning and management templates, video courses and guides to map, plan and manage their marketing using the RACE Planning framework.

- ✓ Here are [10 reasons why Expert members use our resources](#).

About the author

[Dr Dave Chaffey](#) is CEO and co-founder of digital marketing management advice site Smart Insights. He is author of 5 bestselling books on Ecommerce including *Digital Marketing: Strategy, Implementation and Practice* and was recognised by the Chartered Institute of Marketing in 2004 as one of 50 marketing 'gurus' worldwide who have helped shape the future of marketing.



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MANAGING SEO FAST START CHECKLIST

About this checklist

If you know the basics of SEO you can use this checklist to review your approach across all of search engine optimisation, following-up the details or the recommended tools using the links on the right.

If you're serious about improving your SEO we recommend our in-depth [7 Steps to SEO guide](#). It clearly explains the best practices of SEO for non-specialists, but with enough detail to improve SEO for your own site or to manage SEO specialists or an agency.

	SEO management activity	Recommended resources	
Step 1 Do an audit and set your goals			
1	Understand your market potential against market share for SEO <i>Review the customer demand, i.e. number of monthly searches in your market for key products and services to see how important SEO is and could be for you. Do a gap analysis to assess your market share for different keyphrases.</i>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Google's new Keyword Planner <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Gap Analysis spreadsheet	<input type="checkbox"/>
2	Setup dashboards and use analytics reports to review the contribution of SEO to your business <i>You'll get more from your SEO if you know how much value it contributes in terms of visits, conversion, plus leads or sales. You also need to separate out the brand visits including your brand name or URL. Then you'll have a baseline to improve against.</i>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Google Webmaster Tools SEO reports - setup in Google Analytics now many phrases are reports as "Not Provided"	<input type="checkbox"/>

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3	Create a categorised target keyphrase list based on customer behaviour <i>It's better to have a list of target keywords rather than none at all, but even better to group keyphrases by behaviour, e.g. brand, compare, cost adjectives.</i>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Understanding consumer keyword behaviour <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Keyword Analysis tools <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Ubersuggest - good for country analysis	<input type="checkbox"/>
Step 2 Make sure the search engines can find your content			
4	Complete a platform or CMS audit for indexing and visibility including Google's quality guidelines <i>An audit will identify whether Google's robots can find different types of content and that they are included within the search listings.</i> <i>You should audit the site for poor quality links which may cause your site to be penalised by Google's Panda or Penguin anti web spam filters (see below).</i>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Google's Webmaster Technical and Quality Guidelines <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Panda vs Penguin	<input type="checkbox"/>
5	Maximise visits from the non-text listings <i>Images, video and news sources are excellent opportunities to drive quality visits if you can beat your competitors in this area.</i>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Google search quality guidelines for images	<input type="checkbox"/>
6	Review whether duplicate content is causing a problem <i>"Dupe content" is often a problem on large sites and can reduce rankings, so work with your agency or SEO specialists whether they have audited this recently...</i>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Introduction to duplicate content <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 4 techniques to avoid duplicate content	<input type="checkbox"/>
7	Review mobile search volume and consumer behaviour <i>Google's keyword planner no longer includes mobile search volume, but Google promises to bring it back. Use analytics to check your mobile SEO is effective - Google has said they may penalise if there is a poor experience on mobile.</i>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Google's new recommendations for mobile SEO	<input type="checkbox"/>

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8	Optimise local content and get listed on Google+ Local if you offer local services and <i>Simple. If your business has a local presence like stores or offices it's essential to have good visibility within Google+ Local and improve reviews, markup and links to these local services.</i>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Local SEO article <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Google Places for Business <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Structured data markup for star rating snippets	<input type="checkbox"/>
9	Put appropriate resource into multilingual SEO (if relevant) <i>Google has become a lot better at identifying local sites, but for businesses who need a local web presence in their major markets this is a major issue which may need specialist assistance - contact us for recommendations on the agency options.</i>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Avoid the top 10 multilingual SEO mistake	<input type="checkbox"/>
Step 3 Work on on-page SEO			
10	Follow-best practice for on-page SEO - audit and re-engineer <i>See the detailed guidance for each of these in our 7 Steps SEO guide and checklist for content owners/writers:</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Define Primary, secondary and tertiary keyphrases for page <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> URL. <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Page title. <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> H1 tag. <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Keyword inclusion in body copy. <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Keyword proximity <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Internal links. <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Image titles and alt tags. 	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> On page SEO guide	<input type="checkbox"/>
11	Ensure your brand messages are effective within the natural listings <i>For prospects, the search results pages in Google (often called the SERPs by search specialists) may be the first time they experience your brand, so make sure you're explaining clearly why you're worth doing business with to encourage clickthrough and explain your offer.</i>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Using analytics to review SERPs message effectiveness	<input type="checkbox"/>

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Step 4 Create awesome content for SEO			
12	Ensure you have a solid content strategy or develop linkbait to engage and gain links <i>A content strategy to create content that naturally attracts links and sharing isn't only vital to SEO today, it helps drive awareness and interaction through social media and online PR plus aids conversion and retention too.</i>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Content marketing strategy 7 Steps guide	<input type="checkbox"/>
13	Create and maintain a blog for fresh content and to attract links <i>Often product or service content won't attract many links and is rarely updated. To win in Google's eyes you need to have engaging content which attracts links - this is why a content hub, blog or similar news or community section are essential.</i>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> We're often asked this question: Which is best for blog SEO: separate domain, subdomain or subfolder?	<input type="checkbox"/>
14	Ensure you're not a Victim of the Panda search filter <i>Google penalises content which doesn't engage users. Make sure your content is shareable through social and attracts links and comments to avoid this penalty.</i>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Beat the Panda	<input type="checkbox"/>
Step 5 Gain more quality links using content marketing			
15	Focus SEO activity on improving link quality via content quality <i>This is THE most important of the success factors, and the toughest to get right... Issues to consider include:</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Number of unique linking domains (dofollowed and nofollowed) <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Domain authority of unique linking domains <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Natural link profile - from a range of different sites. <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Link types - text links are better than image links generally <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Anchor text quality - better if it includes keywords, but must be diverse or subject to Penguin filter <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Quality links are do-followed. Many blog comments and social media updates are nofollowed and do not pass significant link benefits. 	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> SEO Detox - identify poor links	<input type="checkbox"/>

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16	<p>Work on blogging outreach, partnering and syndication</p> <p><i>Working with other site owners is still an effective technique provided you don't break Google's quality guidelines. Never buy links, but consider:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Quality guest blogging of original content on high quality sites ✓ Content syndication (sharing existing content) ✓ Approaching other sites and publishers when you have outstanding content to share to encourage them to feature your content ✓ Niche directories offering links on quality pages that are indexed by Google (less effective than previously) ✓ Press releases on quality sites (less effective) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ A free field guide to creating links from Kelvin Newman 	<input type="checkbox"/>
17	<p>Avoid being a victim of the Penguin web spam filter</p> <p><i>Penguin is a group of updates focused on what Google calls 'web spam'. Some sites received notifications in Google Webmaster Tools of potential problems. Google reviewed the profile or patterns of sites linking to a site, in particular the anchor text pattern.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ 5 types of website links to avoid 	<input type="checkbox"/>
18	<p>Increase your "social signals" by using social media optimisation (SMO)</p> <p><i>Social media signals started to play a part in search engine algorithms back in December 2010 but it wasn't until 2011 that the likes of Google really started to pay attention and dedicate more effort to indexing social content and using social signals to boost content in search results.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Dave Chaffey: What is SMO? 	<input type="checkbox"/>

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19	Prove author quality through Google Authorship <i>Google relates the Google+ profile of post authors to their content and assesses their influence. Many think this assessment of credibility will increase in importance in future.</i>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Making the most of Google authorship markup	<input type="checkbox"/>
Step 6 Refine your internal linking			
20	Refine your internal linking <i>Internal linking isn't discussed as much as other SEO techniques. But we think it's really powerful to give better SEO results AND you control it!</i>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Are you using the right types of internal links?	<input type="checkbox"/>
Step 7 Improving SEO through analytics			
21	Use Advanced Segments in Google Analytics to review success <i>We recommend setting up 4 advanced segments to help review SEO success and how it's integrated with paid search.</i>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Using Google Analytics to audit and improve SEO	<input type="checkbox"/>
22	Report on not-provided <i>Google Analytics now reports the majority of keywords to sites today as 'not provided'. In our 7 Steps guide we explain alternatives to finding the actual keywords used to reach a site.</i>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Reporting on not-provided	<input type="checkbox"/>

We hope you have found this Fast Start summary of the success factors for SEO useful. If you're looking for more in-depth advice on SEO, Expert members of Smart Insights can download our other resources on SEO:

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If you have any questions or comments, we'd love to hear from you - please [contact us](#).

Dave Chaffey and the Smart Insights team



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