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The Only Guide to
Effective SEO
You'll Ever Need

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In today's competitive digital environment, SEO isn't something that's "nice to do." It's an imperative part of any marketing strategy if you want to get your website in front of your target customers.

But saying that you should do SEO and actually doing it are two entirely different things, as most webmasters quickly find out. A simple Google search for "SEO strategies" turns up thousands of results, many of which offer conflicting information.

So what's a webmaster to do? The answer to choosing an effective SEO approach lies in understanding how the search engines operate and matching the specific SEO techniques you use to their ultimate objectives.

If that sounds complicated, don't worry—we're going to break things down section by section in this guide, in addition to leaving you with all the action items needed to put our recommendations into effect.

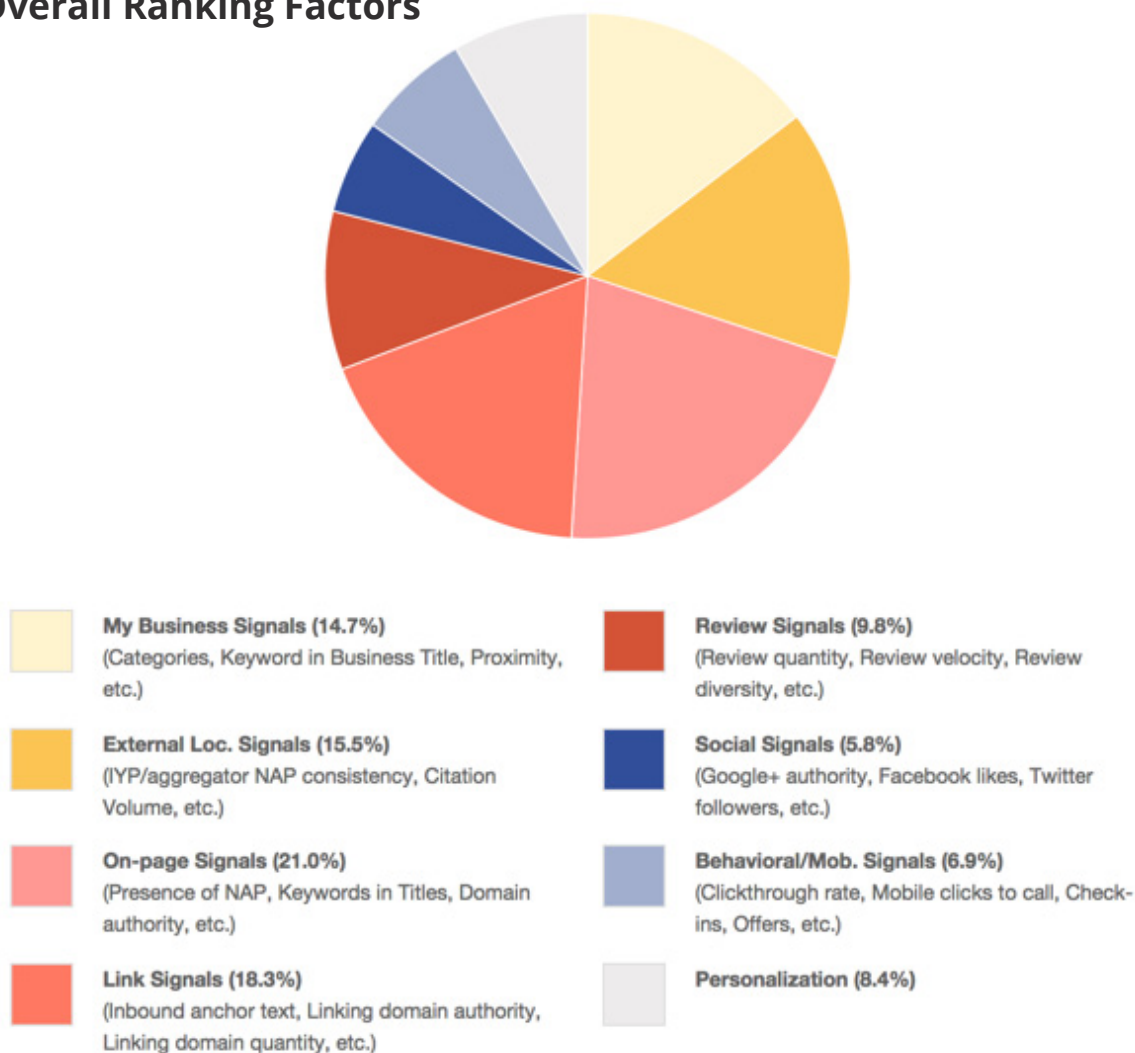**Before we get started, here are some examples of clients that we've implemented SEO strategies for:**

Note: If you are familiar with the basic concepts of SEO please scroll down and begin with the 'Build Epic Content' section.

On-page SEO refers to the actions you take on your website to make it more accessible to the automated search engine "spider" programs that scan your site's code; they extract the information needed to determine whether you should appear first or fiftieth (or not at all) for the specific queries that users enter into the search engines. You or your web developer should be able to handle all these recommendations.

Overall Ranking Factors

My Business Signals (14.7%)
(Categories, Keyword in Business Title, Proximity, etc.)

External Loc. Signals (15.5%)
(IYP/aggregator NAP consistency, Citation Volume, etc.)

On-page Signals (21.0%)
(Presence of NAP, Keywords in Titles, Domain authority, etc.)

Link Signals (18.3%)
(Inbound anchor text, Linking domain authority, Linking domain quantity, etc.)

Review Signals (9.8%)
(Review quantity, Review velocity, Review diversity, etc.)

Social Signals (5.8%)
(Google+ authority, Facebook likes, Twitter followers, etc.)

Behavioral/Mob. Signals (6.9%)
(Clickthrough rate, Mobile clicks to call, Check-ins, Offers, etc.)

Personalization (8.4%)

(source)

Think of on-page SEO like the foundation of your house. The work you do to optimize your website lays the groundwork for the success of your campaign. If it's lacking—and if, as a result, the search engines' crawling programs aren't able to index your site's content—no amount of external backlinks pointing towards your site is going to make up for your shaky underpinnings.

That said, knowing what to optimize and where on your website to optimize it has gotten a bit murky over the past few years. Back around 2005, on-page optimization involved **slapping keywords into various places on your site** and hoping for the best. But SEO best practices have gotten much more sophisticated since then, thanks to search engine algorithms that have evolved to combat over-optimization spam.

Currently, it's estimated that **more than 200 variables** play a role in your site's search engine rankings, all of which are weighted differently and some of which are only triggered in specific instances.

Off-Page SEO

Off-page SEO includes actions taken by other webmasters on their own websites that have the potential to influence how your site performs in the search results listings. The best known off-page SEO tactic is link building: the process of encouraging other websites to include hypertext links back to your own pages (which, in Google's eyes, are "votes of confidence" vouching for your content). While you may be able to influence the creation of new backlinks, it'll be up to other webmasters to actually put these into place.

That's a general overview of how off-page SEO works, but in practice, things can look a little different. If you're ever in need of a good laugh, get a group of SEO "experts" together and ask them whether or not backlinks still matter for search engine optimization.

Seriously. Try it.

The fact of the matter is that ten years ago you could pick a random keyword, throw a web page together on the subject, point a few dozen exact-match anchor text backlinks, and you'd be ranking within a week. Obviously, things have changed since then, though the degree to which the importance of backlinks has shifted is the subject of much debate.

Here's Cory Collins, writing for Search Engine Watch on **why link building still matters in 2015**.

And here's Elisa Gabbert, writing for WordStream on **how the SEO link is dead**.

Who are you supposed to believe?

We advocate for a moderate approach. In the past, Google relied on links—both their quantity and their quality—to rank websites, simply because that was one of the few factors they were able to measure consistently. Today, their algorithms are much more sophisticated; as a result, they're able to better understand user behavior and user preferences in more complex terms.

Will link building as a ranking factor ever truly be replaced? It's possible. It may not be likely in the near future, but it is feasible. With this in mind, we recommend the following strategies, all of which continue to build the kinds of links that the search engines have always valued. These strategies also drive growth in the engagement metrics that Google is likely to reward in the future.

As we explore specific strategies relating to on-page and off-page SEO throughout this guide, keep the classic advice from **The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy** in mind: don't panic. Even putting a few of the recommendations from this guide into practice on your website can improve its performance. As you gain confidence, give some of the other suggestions a try. Over time, the amount of organic traffic you'll be able to generate from the natural search results will explode.

Ready to get started? Let's go...

Build Epic Content

Imagine, for a second, that you're Google. You want to send people to the best results for their queries because if people start to doubt for a second that your query-result matches aren't the best around, they'll go and use the next best search engine. And if they're using another engine, you're not able to generate revenue from the people who advertise on your results pages.

What kind of result would you want to send somebody to?

Say a user entered the query "SEO strategies." As Google, you'd probably want to serve up something that's factually correct, well-researched, up-to-date, and engaging to read—basically, a really great piece of content. It's no coincidence that great writing is also the kind of content that's going to lead to the most natural backlinks, thanks to webmasters who want to share these resources with their audiences.

Google can't necessarily measure all of these factors yet. For example, how exactly would Google quantify an engaging tone so that it can be analyzed by the algorithms underpinning their search results? In the meantime, content quality can be approximated by the number of valid links pointing to it, but as search evolves in the future, it's likely that these softer human-interaction signs will play a stronger role.

But here's the thing. Whether you want to drive backlinks now or engagement metrics in the future, the solution is still the same thing: **build epic content**.

Here's some proof from serpIQ demonstrating how effective long-form content can be:
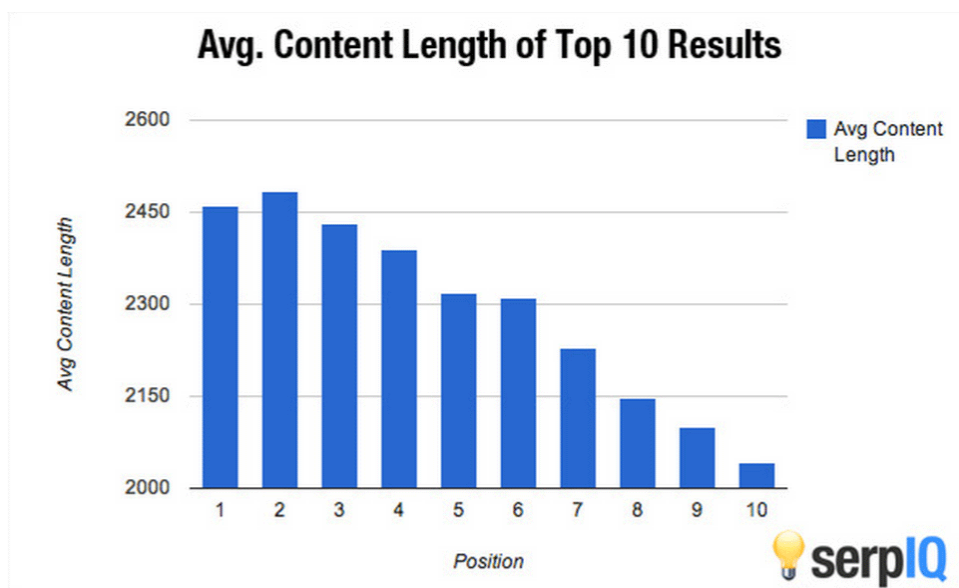
While there's no single set of criteria that distinguishes epic content from "slightly less than epic" content, there are a few strategies you can use to be sure that the work you're publishing meets this standard.

1. **The sniff test.** The easiest way to determine whether your content qualifies as epic is to take a good, honest look at what you've published compared to what your competitors have put out there. In the context of your industry's publishing space, is the work you've done truly exceptional? Or did you cut corners to save time somewhere? If you can't confidently say that you've written something great, go back to the drawing board and keep at it until you've produced something special.

2. **The "skyscraper" method.** If you're starting your content creation efforts from scratch, give the **skyscraper method**—popularized by Brian Dean of the **Backlinko** blog — a try. To use it, simply find a weak piece of content that was created by one of your competitors and expand on it to produce an epic-quality resource. Obviously, you shouldn't outright plagiarize, but if your keyword research suggests that a particular topic is popular with your audience, finding a content piece that's already out there to build on can cut your work time down significantly.

3. **The expert interview.** No matter what industry they're in, people find interviews really interesting. They love hearing those "out-of-reach" experts share their experiences in this unscripted manner. As a website owner, you can capitalize on this by either conducting or participating in interviews. If you've never interviewed anybody before, you'll be amazed at how easy it is (and how many "big names" are willing to do an interview when they've got something to promote). Get started now, and you'll wind up with resources that meet the epic content threshold while driving substantial link volume at the same time.

Action Tip: Run every piece of content on which you put your brand name through an epic content "sniff test." If you haven't created truly exceptional work, try a new format (like a skyscraper-style post or an expert interview) or hone your existing content until it meets this standard.

Repurpose Content

Don't forget about **repurposing the content that you've already created**. There's no way around it—building epic content takes time. Get more out of your investment, and reach additional viewers who prefer one content style over another, by transforming one piece into several.
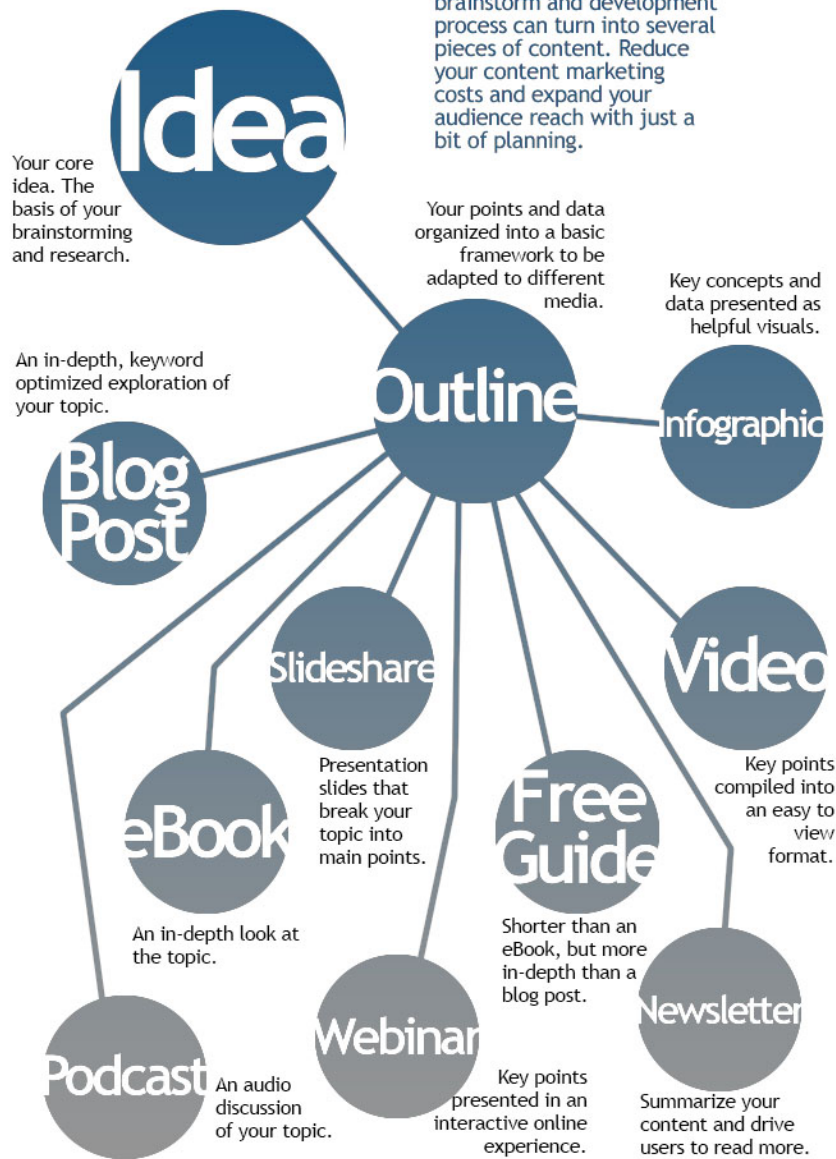
For example, suppose you've crafted a 5,000+ word blog post that's packed full of thorough research and helpful suggestions. Instead of simply moving on to create another blog post, you could repurpose this one to make:

- An infographic using your data sources
- A downloadable checklist to be used as a freebie or a lead magnet
- An email newsletter series
- A SlideShare slide deck
- A video script to aid in the creation of one or more YouTube videos
- A podcast script

Really, the possibilities are endless. Don't settle for creating a single content piece. Leverage the engagement and link-building benefits of epic content by repurposing your individual creations into several different formats.

Content Repurposing

Get the most out of your content marketing! With repurposing, a single brainstorm and development process can turn into several pieces of content. Reduce your content marketing costs and expand your audience reach with just a bit of planning.

Idea

Your core idea. The basis of your brainstorming and research.

Outline

Your points and data organized into a basic framework to be adapted to different media.

Infographic

Key concepts and data presented as helpful visuals.

Blog Post

An in-depth, keyword optimized exploration of your topic.

Slideshare

Presentation slides that break your topic into main points.

Video

Key points compiled into an easy to view format.

eBook

An in-depth look at the topic.

Free Guide

Shorter than an eBook, but more in-depth than a blog post.

Podcast

An audio discussion of your topic.

Webinar

Key points presented in an interactive online experience.

Newsletter

Summarize your content and drive users to read more.

(source)

Action Tip: Every time you create an epic content piece, spin off at least three other variations using different structures. Space out the promotion of these new, repurposed content pieces to avoid inundating your website visitors with too much information on the same subject.

Reach Out to Influencers

If you're doing your job right, the epic content you create should include several different research sources—potentially from other thought leaders within your industry.

Wouldn't it be nice if you could reach out to the influencers whom you've mentioned and have them share your creation with their established audiences?

Well, you can—that's the whole idea behind **influencer outreach**.

Getting your content noticed and shared by authority figures within your industry has the same effect as building epic-quality content in the first place. For every influencer (and every member of that influencer's audience) who **shares your work**, you earn backlinks. And when influencers put your work in front of all their followers, your potential for engagement grows as well.

Unfortunately, though, while this idea is simple in principle, it can be harder to execute. The following tips may increase your odds of building successful influencer relationships:

- **Check your ego at the door.** Remember what we said earlier about giving your content the "sniff test" to determine whether or not it's truly epic? That's even more important when you're sharing your content with influencers. These authority figures are bombarded, day in and day out, with requests for assistance. Don't waste their time by asking them to share substandard content. Only be in touch if you've got something truly valuable to share.

- **Build relationships slowly over time.** People are more likely to do favors for people they already know and trust, and that's as true for influencers as it is for anybody else. Building relationships with influencers doesn't happen overnight, though. Start by retweeting their messages, or shooting over a "thank you" email if you genuinely appreciated something they published recently. Let the relationship grow organically over time, rather than being too pushy in your requests for assistance.

- **Prove your value first.** If you really want to get your influencer relationship started out on the right foot, you may need to put in your own effort first. If you know that an influencer has a course that's launching soon or a new book coming out, offer to promote it to your list. Share their recent blog posts with your social followers. Demonstrating that you bring something of value to the table will put you light-years ahead of those who ask for favors first.

When you feel comfortable doing so, reach out to influencers via e-mail or social media whenever you mention them in your own content pieces (there are **plenty of free templates** online for this purpose already). Don't expect that every request will end in a new backlink, but do appreciate those opportunities when they come your way.

Action Tip: Include a reference to at least 2-3 influencers in your industry in every content piece you create. Build ongoing relationships with these authority figures, and reach out as you mention them. If appropriate, ask for a backlink or social share.

Practice Broken Link Building

One final link-building strategy that's seriously underrated, but very effective, is broken link building.

A long time ago, a now-defunct website in your niche published a great blog post titled "SEO Strategies That Will Work Forever." Two hundred other websites linked to it—and many of those links are still live, even though the original blog post is not.

By using tools like Point Blank SEO's **Broken Link Finder Tool**, you can identify these opportunities within your industry and create your own "skyscraper-style" resource on the same subject. Now all you have to do is reach out to the sites hosting the broken links and recommend that they link to your live resource instead.

Of course, that's just one variation on a theme. Suppose, instead, that you use programs like **TinEye** to find other websites that are using your copyrighted images without providing proper attribution. Instead of issuing a DMCA notice and demanding that they take them down, why not request that they simply link back to your website instead?

Broken link building isn't as easy as it used to be, but it's still a powerful technique for generating backlinks. For even more information on putting this strategy into practice, check out Moz's **Broken Link Building Bible**.

> **Action Tip:** Once a month, do a few quick scans and try to identify 20-50 broken link building opportunities in your industry. If you can provide an unbroken alternative, use a **WHOIS lookup tool** to find the contact information of the owner of the site hosting the broken link and use a **template email** requesting that the original link be redirected to your site.
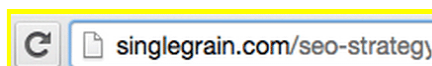
Optimize Your Permalink URLs

Open up a page on your website, and take a look at the URL displayed in your browser window. What do you see?

Does it look like this?
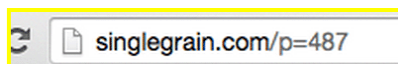
Or does it look like this?

Now, guess which one's better for your on-page SEO?

It shouldn't come as a surprise to hear that including your target keywords in your page URLs is a powerful SEO ranking factor. But there's one other piece of advice you'll want to take away from this section...

Not only should your permalink URLs include your target keywords, they should be kept short as well. According to Google, the **first 3-5 words in a URL** are given more weight than those that come later. Make sure your preferred phrases fall into this window for best SEO results.

Grade Your Keywords

Determining keywords can be hard. Use the grader to help find keywords likely to return a lot of good prospects. The best keywords will have over 1000 opportunities. Keywords with fewer than 100 may struggle to find good results. Remember, it is better to cast a wide net and let our system filter out the bad results.

Keyword	Score	Assessment
cancer research	223	Good
periodic table	1140	Best
stem cell research	778	Great
scientific research	5460	Best
science clubs	4	Restrictive

(**source**)

Action Item: Make sure your permalink structure is SEO-friendly and includes your target keyword within a maximum of 3-5 words. If you aren't able to make this change by yourself, have your web developer do it for you.

Optimize Your Title Tags

This one is another no-brainer—with a twist.

If you've been following along with the changes in SEO that have happened over the past decade or so, you probably already know that including your target keyword in your page title tags has been the default wisdom since day one. But you may have also heard that Google **puts little value on meta tag information**, thanks to years of spammers stuffing this field full of keyword nonsense.

So which advice do you heed? Include the keyword in your title tag or not?

Moz argues that not only is optimizing this valuable field a **powerful on-page SEO signal**—it's one of the most important things you can do for your site. Even further, studies conducted by the organization have found that title tags with the target keyword included at the start of the title (rather than in the middle or at the end) perform the best.

The bottom line? Optimize your title tag, and do so by inserting your target keyword phrase into the beginning of your title.

Action Item: Keep your title tag **under 70 characters** (the maximum number of characters displayed in the search engine results page (SERP) snippet, and place your target keyword at the start for best results.

Make Your Title
Tag Work For You

I know we just talked about the title tag, but stick with us; there's one more thing you need to do to squeeze the maximum SEO value possible out of this critical site component.

Don't just include your target keyword at the start of your title tag—make sure this tag is **wrapped in an H1 headline tag** wherever it's displayed on your website.

If your site runs on WordPress, there's a good chance that this has already been done automatically for you. But if your theme overrides this setting—or if your website runs on another CMS or uses coding language that doesn't include H1 headline tags as a default—you'll need to make this adjustment manually.

If you can't do it yourself, get your developer to do it (or outsource this quick project using services like **Guru** or **Elance**). It's a simple tweak, but making sure that your title tag is wrapped correctly as a headline is an easy way to get the search engines to pay attention to the words you've included there. Google and the other engines put special weight on your headline tags, as they assume that the words you've included here are meant to summarize the content of the rest of the page.

Don't disappoint them. Wrap your title tag in H1 tags and give them the keywords that they're looking for to help **index** and **rank** your page appropriately.

Action Item: Use a tool like **Firebug** to be sure that the title tag displayed on your website is wrapped in an H1 tag. If it isn't, make the change yourself or have your developer do it.

Form the Title of the Snippet

On the subject of title tag optimization, there's one last little thing we just can't let slide. Traditionally, the title tag has been the place to stick your target keyword as part of your on-site SEO. But it also serves another important purpose: **forming the title of the snippet that's pulled into the Google search results**.

In most cases, your title tag is used as-is in the search results, making it the perfect place to introduce a little creative copywriting. Take a look at the results below for the keyword phrase "SEO strategy:"

Which of these two results would you be more likely to click on? I'd guess that, for most people, it's the second snippet—discovering the strategies you can't live without sounds a lot more intriguing than simply developing a strategy.

When you create an engaging headline, not only do you get all the benefits of getting more people to your website (and, potentially, converting them into leads or customers), you also get an SEO boost as the result of your **higher click-through rate (CTR)**. When Google sees more people clicking through your snippet to your website, they assume that search users are doing so because the site in question has the best results for their needs—and that's the kind of site they want to reward.

More traffic and better search results placements. It's a win-win.

Action Item: Think like a copywriter as you craft your title tags. The more people you can get clicking through to your website with an engaging snippet title, the more you stand to benefit in terms of conversion rates and SEO performance.

Optimize Your Body Content

"Body content" refers to the meat of your website: the text of your blog posts or the words that make up your About page description. Your target keywords belong there, although they no longer need to be stuffed in to meet some arbitrary keyword density requirements.

Today's on-page SEO best practices are even simpler: just **drop your target keyword once into the first 100 words** of your body content.

That's it.

Including your target keyword early on like this helps Google and the other search engines to understand what your content is about. Taking this step alone isn't going to move your site from page ten of the SERPs to the top spot, but it will improve the engine's understanding of your work—potentially leading to improved rankings or inclusion in the search results for other related words.

Don't get crazy about including it as many times as possible. Find one instance where you can include your target keyword in a natural way, and that's it. You've optimized your body content for your chosen phrase.

Action Item: Incorporate your target keyword into the first 100 words of your body content in a natural way. Do so for every page you've optimized for a specific keyword.

Capitalize on LSI

No, not CSI. When it comes to SEO, crime scene investigations aren't important. LSI, or **latent semantic indexing**, is.

LSI is a fancy way of saying that Google uses synonyms and related words and phrases to evaluate both a page's relevancy and quality. Let's explore this idea further with an example.

Suppose you're selling iPhone cases and you want to optimize your page for the keyword "Apple" (that's not a great idea, but remember, this is just an example). Take a look at the following two text snippets:

> *"Apple makes the best smartphones, and those smartphones deserve the best cases. If you need a new case for your Apple iPhone, you need one of our water-proof, shatter-proof models."*
>
> *"The apple is a delicious fruit that is grown on trees worldwide. There are a number of different varieties of apple, but all contain the essential antioxidants and nutrients needed for good health."*

Both of these paragraphs include the target keyword "Apple," but it's the words around them that tell the search engines what they're about. In the first instance, the presence of keywords like "smartphones," "iPhone," and "case" indicate that the page is talking about the Apple iPhone. In the second example, words like "fruit," "trees," and "nutrients" prompt an understanding that the page refers to edible apples.

All this is to say that including related keywords alongside your target keyword in your body content helps increase the search engines' understanding of your website, as well as their ability to index and rank your page appropriately.

So how can you find the keyword variations you should be including in your content? You've got a few different options:

- **Brainstorm them.** Think about the related phrases your visitors might use when thinking about or discussing your target keyword and then enter them into your text.

- **Use Google's related searches feature.** Enter your target keyword into Google's search bar, then scroll down to the bottom of the first page of results, where you'll see a section labeled "Searches related to [your search query]." All these are **potential LSI keywords** that Google already deems substantially related to your target keyword.

- **Look in your Webmaster Tools account.** There, you'll find a list of the keywords that your website is **already ranking for**. Incorporating any of these phrases that are related to your target keyword has the potential to improve your site's rankings for both your target query and your LSI keywords.

Ultimately, the best way to incorporate LSI keywords into your body content is simply to write naturally. Don't spend too much time on this recommendation, but do be sure to use a wide variety of language to describe and discuss your target keyword. Even if you don't do so consciously, writing in a descriptive way will introduce multiple keyword variations to your site—including some that make their way into your content unintentionally.

Action Item: Come up with 5-10 LSI keyword variations using any of the methods described above. Incorporate these into your body content in a natural way.

Up Your Content Length

There are a few website owners out there who can get away with writing short, regular blog posts without seeing a decrease in their site performance (I'm looking at you, **Seth Godin**!).

The odds that you're one of them are, unfortunately, pretty slim.

If you want to improve your on-page SEO performance, you've simply got to put more on the page for Google and the other search engines to consider. How much more? Well, evidence from a MicroSiteMasters. com industry study suggests that content that is **at least 1,500 words in length** ranks significantly higher than shorter pieces.

As an added bonus? It's also going to increase your social shares:


Average Shares by Content Length
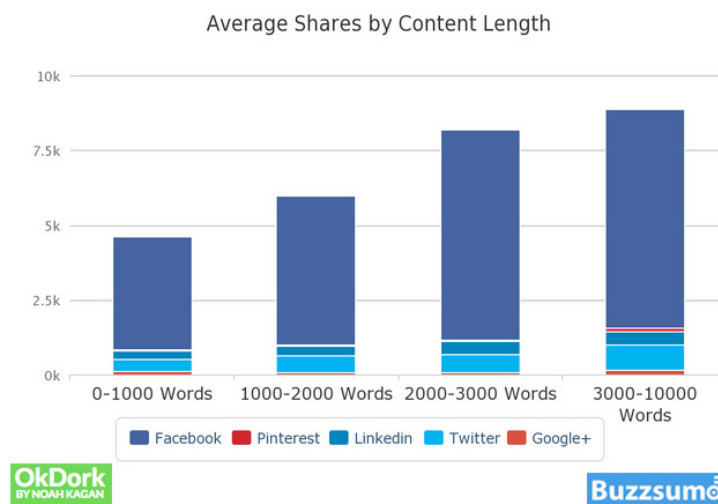
(**source**)

If you've got a site full of short articles, don't panic. Instead of deleting everything or updating all of your posts at once, begin by improving the content on the pages of your site that receive the most traffic. Make sure any new content pieces meet this guideline (whenever possible), and you should begin to see a corresponding improvement in your overall rankings.

Action Item: Include at least 1,500 words in every new piece of website content you publish. As time permits, identify the 10-20 top performing pages on your website and update them to at least 1,500 words, along with any pages you deem as underperforming according to your conversion goals.

Text is great. Text-based articles can be used for a number of different purposes, from sharing a viewpoint, to telling a story, to providing instruction on a given subject.

But let's face it, they don't say that **a picture is worth a thousand words** for the fun of it.
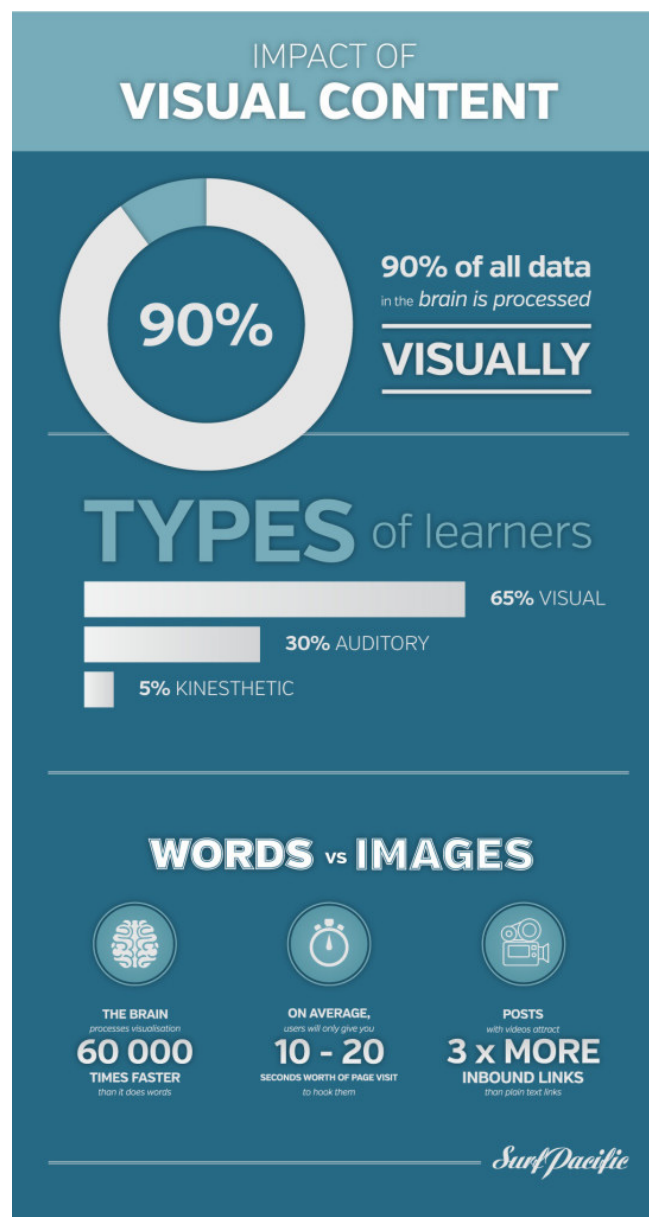
(**source**)

Rather than building your site from text alone, fill it out with interesting pictures (but please don't bore your guests with overused stock imagery), video clips, infographics, diagrams, and more. There are two reasons to do this:

1. **Visual content reduces your bounce rate.** Packing your site full of engaging images and videos makes it more likely that visitors will stick around and explore what you have to offer.

2. **Visual content increases your average time on site.** You know that metric in your Google Analytics account that shows how long visitors spend browsing your pages? Add a bunch of visual content, and you'll see that number skyrocket.

Both of these improvements are important because they're tied to Google's **interaction-based ranking factors**.

Essentially, Google wants to send people from the search engine ranking pages to the sites that are going to best meet their needs. And if these visitors bounce after spending ten seconds on the page, odds are they didn't find what they were looking for. Google remembers this, and considers that maybe your site isn't the best place to send traffic that's searching for the same thing in the future.

That's a pretty simplified explanation for what happens behind the scenes with Google's algorithms. What you need to take away is that Google cares about how much search traffic engages with your website, and that increasing the amount of visual content on your pages is a good way to improve your performance according to these metrics.

Action Item: Try to include at least two pieces of visual content (more is better) on pages you've optimized around target keywords, as well as on any pages that are critical to your sales funnel. Be sure to follow **copyright restrictions** and make sure that you have the appropriate permissions before adding other people's images to your site.

Share the Link Love

Getting inbound backlinks is a major priority for SEO-savvy webmasters. Giving them out hasn't always been such an important consideration.

It used to be that any links on your site that pointed away from your pages risked leaking "**link juice**" (the mathematical value of your inbound and outbound links as calculated by Google's **PageRank** system). Since then, Google's understanding of the complexity of link structures has improved significantly. Now, linking out to valuable resources is seen as the mark of a website that cares about providing the best possible experience for its visitors.

To prove this new outbound linking paradigm, SEOWizz.net conducted an industry study which found that linking out to authority sites (like Harvard.edu and Wikipedia) actually **boosted a page's ranking in Google**.

There's one caveat there, though—and that's the word "authority." If you're going to take advantage of this on-page SEO strategy, you can't just link out to any old website. Include outbound links on every page of your website where it's contextually appropriate to do so, but make sure that those links only go to reputable, industry-leading resources.

Action Item: Include at least 2-3 outbound links to high-value external resources from reputable publishers. If you're concerned about the loss of SEO value, include a "**rel=nofollow**" tag to prevent the flow of PageRank. If you're concerned about traffic loss, set external links to open in new browser windows or tabs, while setting internal links to open in the same window.

Speed it Up

Site load times are well-established as a ranking factor, so if your site is slow to load, do everybody a favor and speed things up!

If you've ever landed on a slow-loading website yourself, you know how frustrating it can be to wait around for the content you want to read to appear—and there's plenty of data to show that your users experience the same frustration.

A **study by MunchWeb** found that nearly 75% of participants wouldn't revisit a website that took longer than four seconds to load. **Further data gathered by Kissmetrics** shows even worse news for e-commerce site owners. By their estimates, a 1-second delay in page response times can lead to a 7% reduction in conversions. For a site making $100,000 a day, that delay could cost you as much as $2.5 million in lost sales every year.

And guess what? It isn't just your users who hate slow-loading pages—Google gets frustrated too. According to a **press release** the search giant released back in 2010:

> *"Speeding up websites is important — not just to site owners, but to all Internet users. Faster sites create happy users and we've seen in our internal studies that when a site responds slowly, visitors spend less time there. But faster sites don't just improve user experience; recent data shows that improving site speed also reduces operating costs. Like us, our users place a lot of value in speed — that's why we've decided to take site speed into account in our search rankings."*

Speeding up page load times should be a no-brainer for webmasters, but how do you get started? Any of the following strategies can help:

- **Cut your images down to size.** WordPress and many other popular CMSs have a convenient feature that lets you upload images of any size and have them automatically shrunk down to fit your theme. That's all well and good when you're building your website, but it can slow things down when your page is required to load the original image and resize things on the fly. A much better solution is to crop your images to the appropriate size using an **image editing tool** before uploading them to your site.

- **Minimize the number of plugins you're using on your site.** The extensibility of today's popular website platforms makes it easy to add any feature you desire with the installation of a simple plugin. The downside? Every plugin you add produces an extra drain on your system. If you've overloaded your site with plugins, try replacing single-feature plugins with those that can pull double-duty, as well as deactivating any that aren't really necessary. Remove plugins one at a time, making sure that your site still performs correctly and checking your site speed using Google's free **PageSpeed Insights tool** to monitor improvements.

- **Enable caching.** Ever notice that websites you've visited before seem to load faster than new pages? That's all thanks to caching—a procedure that involves saving website elements and settings in temporary storage on your computer so that future visits don't trigger a new HTTP request to the server. Caching plugins like **W3 Total Cache** can boost your overall site speed by ten times when fully configured, though these same protocols can be **implemented by hand** if your site doesn't support plugins.

If these three changes alone don't produce the site speed improvements you need, run your pages through the PageSpeed Insights tool for even more ideas. Minimizing HTTP requests, reducing server response time, minifying resources, and reducing redirects may help as well. Your developer can help you with these changes if you aren't comfortable making them on your own.

Action Item: Run your website through Google's PageSpeed Insights tool. If issues are discovered, start by implementing the three changes described above. If making these changes doesn't produce the desired improvements, try the other suggestions provided by PageSpeed Insights or talk to your developer for further recommendations.

Conclusion

Great SEO isn't easy, and it isn't something you're ever going to be "done" with.

Even if you commit yourself to performing SEO work regularly, you may find that future changes to the search engine algorithms require that your preferred strategies evolve with the times.

Whether you're reading this e-book about effective SEO now or five years in the future, adhering to the two important overarching principles described here—making your site accessible and appealing to the search engines, and undertaking marketing activities that are as engaging to human audiences as they are to Google—will help guide your website to success.

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