



SEO: Improving Your Online Presence

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Learn the less talked-about components that can improve the ranking factors of your site. In this talk, we will be diving into the structural changes you can make to your website, and content, to achieve a higher ranking now and into the future.



Intro

My name is Margaret Reffell, and I run a digital agency named Bspoke Media in downtown Toronto. We build custom websites for small businesses and online shops.

Today we'll be discussing search engine optimization (SEO), and how to optimize your website for optimal rankings and searchability.

The information discussed has been collected from the most recent data supplied between 2018 and 2019.





How to use this information

1

Your own website.

Feel free to use the following information as a guide to optimize your own personal website.

2

Clients and work.

The following information can also be used to as a guideline on how you can optimize clients sites in the future, or suggestions for your future employer to optimize.



Disclaimer

The following information is a collection of experience, research and implementation of best user practices. Google does not disclose their search algorithms, and their guidelines can change at any point in time.

Topic Overview

What is SEO?

The 2 types of SEO

SEO Ranking Factors

Resources

Future trend analysis

Unknowns and new territory

Best first steps. What now?



What is SEO?

Essentially, search engine optimization is the ability to organize the content and structure of your website so it appears high in search engine rankings, when people search certain terms.

SEO is meant to apply to organic search results only.

More and more, people are “buying” their way to the top. We’re not going to cover paid rankings in this webinar, but basically you would purchase Google ads for the keywords that you want to rank for. The more popular the search term, the more expensive the ad will be.





Understanding the 2 Major Components

Content SEO

01

The content that the website owner published or curated and promoted to their audience

Factors:

- Keywords
- Consistency of content creation
- Relevance
- Domain authority



Structural SEO

02

The structural makeup of a website and how a website is coded and hosted, and how that affects ranking factors.

Factors:

- Site speed
- Image labelling
- Code structure
- Accessibility





Understanding Ranking Factors



Ranking Factors

The most comprehensive collection of data on the ranking factors that I've seen in the last year has been a report created by SparkToro.

It's an assessment of the findings of almost 1600 SEO experts with experience in the field. Because Google doesn't make their systems and algorithms public, our next best source is the study of mass trends.

We'll go through the following factors one by one in order of "importance".



1. Content Relevance

Content should be relevant to current events, an update or new data on past events and closely related to the rest of the content on the website.

- Related to main topic
- Updated frequently/consistently
- Relevant to search terms
- Correct spelling, grammar and content structure



2. Quality of Linking

“Black Hat” practices of link stuffing and suspicious backlinking are now being penalized, so this pushes up the rankings of sites with high quality links:

- Having outside and social sources linking to your content
- Having popular large sites link to your content



3. Query relevant words

Basically, including words that people will be searching for in your copy.

- Include words and phrases in a natural way
- Include multiple words and phrases that people are searching for (different variations)
- Don't hide or cloak that content
- Avoid "keyword stuffing"



4. Domain Authority

This is developed by Moz, utilized by Google, and you don't have much say in it on a short term basis, but following the rest of the guidelines over time, and time itself, will allow that to improve.

Google gives ratings to sites between 1 and 100 to determine how much of an authority they are in the field.

This means having relevant, up to date, correct content over time will build trust with Google.



5. Mobile friendliness

This is growing fast!

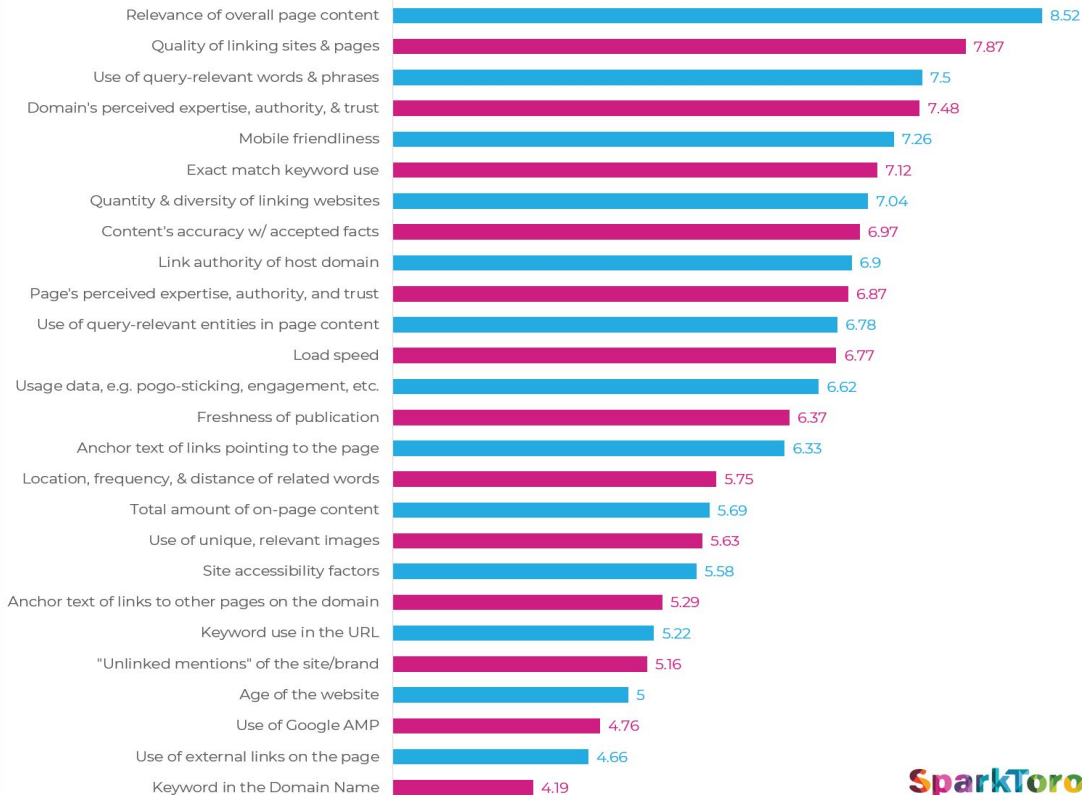
Mobile views have surpassed those of viewing on a desktop computer by a lot.

Many sites are up over 70% of total visits being done on mobile.

Google wants to ensure people get a good user experience when searching, so mobile friendly sites are 100% necessary going forward.

26 Google Ranking Factors Ranked

(1,584 aggregated opinions, mean values, data collected August, 2019)



6. Exact keyword use

Finding out exactly what language people are using when they type their query into Google can help rankings.

Bear in mind, the topic itself will be most important, and exact wording of keywords within that topic will become secondary.



7. Quantity and Diversity

Incoming links help build domain authority, and improve your ability to show higher in search engines.

There's 2 factors that go into assessing this:

- The amount of links coming into your site and referring to your content
- The diversity of links. Ie: the links can't all come from the same place, they must vary widely in sources.



8. Factual accuracy

This is fairly new for Google. Opinions and editorials will always be popular, but they are trying harder to crack down on the spread of objectively false information.

Ways to improve:

- Quote your sources
- Don't repeat info that has not been vetted
- Clearly delineate opinions from facts



9. Link authority

This differs from domain authority, because now we're not talking about your site's domain authority.

Google looks for the credibility of the site linking to yours.

Fact: that's why as your site grows in popularity, you'll get a ton of spam comments in an attempt for people to hijack your domain authority.



10. Expertise and Trust

This can be a bit vague and not entirely objective.

Google will often take the context of how you are mentioned “around the internet” and decide if you are an authority in your field based on competitors and people’s perception of your work.

A lot of it is behind Google’s scenes.



11. Query Relevant Entities

This differs from query relevant content in a sense that, the words on the page matter (content), but there are other entities on the page that may also be relevant to search terms, and must be coded and labelled correctly.

Examples:

- Images
- Graphs
- Charts
- Animations
- Videos



12. Load Speed

This is an item that is easily tested, but not as easily fixed.

Test here:

<https://developers.google.com/speed/pagespeed/insights/>

It will give you a breakdown of improvements, many of which will require some additional coding.

The goal is to get over 80



13. Usage/Engagement

Interaction with your content is also important. This could mean engaging in comments, clicking through multiple pages, and spending a lot of time on the site.

High ranking a disadvantage?

If you do rank high for a certain term, and Google finds that people leave and return to search right away, the site loses authority and gets dropped quickly. This can happen on a bad re-design or confusing homepage.



14. Publication Freshness

The reason people blog weekly is because Google ranks new content higher, because it assumes it's more up to date and accurate.

You can also get this effect by updating older articles with new, improved information.

Frequent activity and up-to-date information is key!



15. Anchor text links

Links within the content of a website are called anchor links.

Labels of incoming links

This factor looks at the quality and relevance of the text that links to a page on your site from another.



16. Location, Frequency, Distance

When you are using keywords within a post/page and also within the site as a whole, the frequency of use of these words, the location of them and the distance (how far in time and space) they are effect rankings.

Frequency = a lot (numbers are relative to site size)

Distance = close in time, and close in space

Location = on all relevant pages/posts



17. Amount of on-page content

The number of words matters. However, quality always beats out quantity.

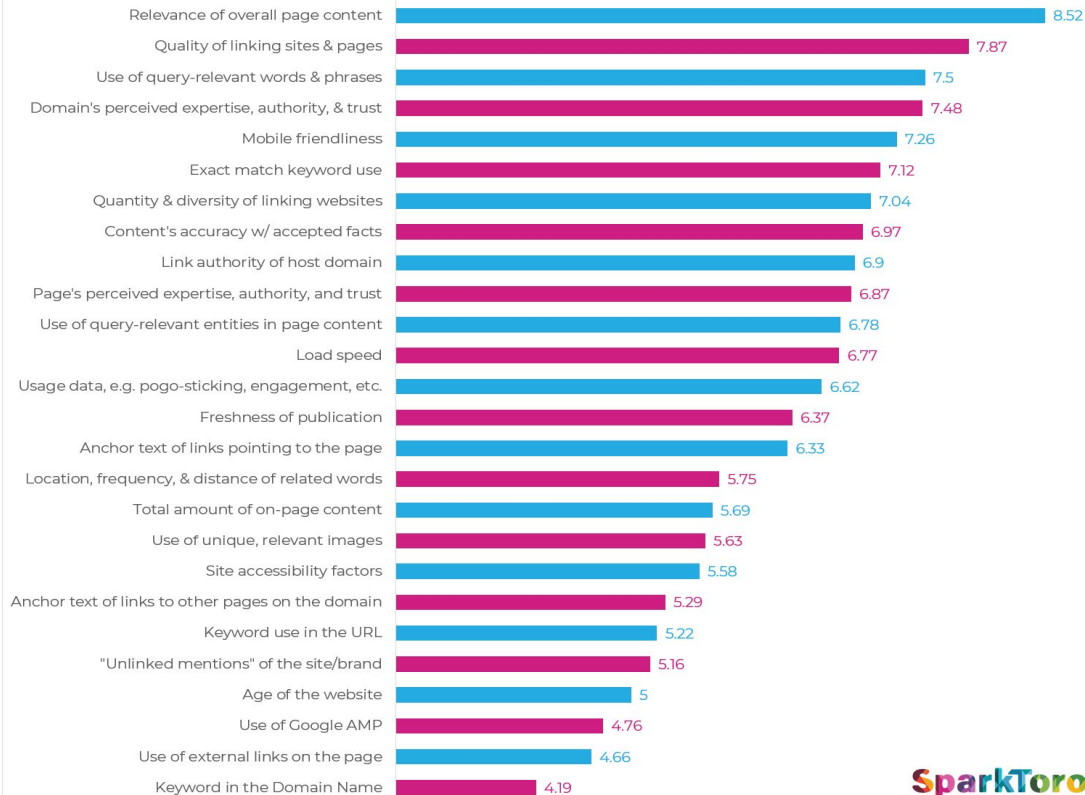
Proposed formula:

1 x week = 500 - 700 word article

4 x year = 1500+ report

26 Google Ranking Factors Ranked

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18. Unique Relevant Images

High quality stock photos are always a good option, here are some tips:

- Use ones you've never seen before in the wild
- Don't take images off Google
- Take and use a pic from your phone
- Get images relevant to your content



19. Site Accessibility

It is now becoming law in many industries to have a fully accessible website.

This will become a huge ranking factor in the future, and is best to plan and resolve that before it does.

Accessibility Factors:

- Alt tags on images
- Link and form tabbing
- Screen readers



20. On-site Anchor Text

Similar to the anchor text above, when you are linking to internal pages within your own site, the text that these links have should be relevant to the link and content that they are pointing to.



21. Keyword in URL

Many times there are multiple keywords related to a topic, but having one of the primary ones in your URL (or slug) can help boost search results of that page.

Example for a search for cat sweaters:

Not good = `domain.com/23786515`

Good = `domain.com/cat-sweaters`



22. Unlinked Mentions

Whenever your brand is mentioned whether it's onsite or offsite, you should have it linked to your website homepage.

What this means is that the linking of the brand is important, but if it's mentioned and "unlinked" it's still a ranking factor, just not as high.



23. Age of the website

The longer the site has been around, the higher it will be ranked.

As you'll notice, it's far down on the list so it's a factor, but not a HUGE factor.



24. Google AMP

Google AMP has been around for a few years, but many have not yet adopted it.

AMP = Accelerated Mobile Pages

This framework can be applied to a site to speed up the loading of pages over mobile. There's a 3-fold SEO benefit of increased site speed, mobile friendliness and the use of AMP.

New features are always rolling out:

<https://amp.dev/documentation/>



25. External Links on the Page

Having inbound links, and links within content rank far above this, but it's also important to have outbound links from your site.

Tips for outbound links:

- Link to high quality well-known brands
- Link to credible sources
- Link to other projects offsite you may have also been involved in



26. Keyword in domain name

This factor is the least relevant, but also the most highly debated.

A good rule to use...

If you're starting a new site from scratch for a brand, try to fit the keyword in your domain. If you have an already existing brand, don't change the URL just to include the keyword. Chances are, your current DA outweighs that.

If you're building a personal brand, use your name.



A horizontal bar with a teal segment on the left and an orange segment on the right, positioned above the text.

Whew!

We covered a lot! Thanks for hanging in.

The following are some of the best resources as well as where to start...



Resources

1

Google Analytics

One of the first things that you can easily install on your website, and will give you the most amount of information about the site and how people are using it.

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

2

Google Webmaster Tools

This tool can help you organize what needs to be indexed by Google, how it shows up in the search results and re-index your site as needed.

<https://search.google.com/search-console/about>



Resources

3

Google Adwords

Even if you're not running ads, you can setup an account and use their keyword finder to find relevant search terms to create content around.

<https://ads.google.com/>

4

KW Finder

This is a paid tool, but a little more in depth than you can get from the Adwords platforms.

<https://kwfinder.com/>



Resources

5

Spark Toro

A great resource for an in-depth analysis of SEO and more charts about ranking factors

<https://sparktoro.com/blog/resources/google-ranking-factors-2019/>

6

Moz.com

The developers of Firefox browser create a ton of content about SEO. A great trusted source. They also offer a great domain analysis tool.

<https://moz.com/domain-analysis>



Resources

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Accessibility

One of our goals is to make a better internet for everyone, that means improving accessibility for all users. Here are the official guidelines.

<https://www.w3.org/WAI/standards-guidelines/wcag/>

8

Google AMP

Want to play around with this under-utilized framework? Check out some of the videos in the documentation.

<https://amp.dev/documentation/>



Resources

9

WPEngine

Tips and resources moving into 2020

<https://wpengine.com/blog/staying-ahead-of-the-seo-game/>

8

Security

All of your search efforts can get thrown out the window if your site ever gets blacklisted.
Keep up with security

<https://sucuri.net/guides/>

Future Trends

What does the future hold for SEO?

My predictions:

- Mobile becoming even more important
- AMP being utilized more
- Accessibility becoming a big ranking factor
- Social stats becoming part of the rankings



Unknowns

There are a few areas that use the internet that we don't take into account for search yet. How is search handled through these?

Unknowns:

- VR and AR
- Voice Search
- IoT (Internet of Things)





Where to start?

0
1



Setup Analytics and Webmaster Tools

Having the tracking items in place to be able to analyze your efforts.

Have a cleanly coded website

Control anything technical that you can. Could be from coding it from scratch, to just making sure your images are labeled with alt-tags. Every small thing adds up!

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3



Create content

Focus on creating the content you love. Be consistent. Be engaging. Be proud of your work.

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2



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Questions?





Thank you.

