



The Expert Guide to Ecommerce SEO

Over **40% of revenue** is generated by organic traffic; therefore, an SEO strategy is critical to ecommerce success.

In this guide, we'll cover:

- ✚ Establishing a keyword strategy
- ✚ Optimizing page content and URL structure
- ✚ Maximizing potential with advanced strategies

CHAPTER 1: SEO FOR ONLINE STORES



Your Go-To SEO Guide

As an online store owner, you know that Google sends you the majority of your traffic. But how do you get more visits—and for free? By knowing the algorithm better than your competitors.

In this guide, we'll show you how to rank #1 in Google. We'll cover how to rank in organic search (rather than paid search, or PPC) when a shopper searches for phrases or keywords relevant to your industry.

You're probably already discoverable on Google on a small scale, but the fact is that 75% of users don't click past the first page. To get to the first page and start driving valuable organic clicks, you'll need to become an SEO pro. It isn't easy, but it's worth it. Read on for SEO strategies and guidance that will help your online store rank above your competitors.

Why is organic traffic important?

- Organic traffic makes up 51% of all website traffic
- Over 40% of revenue is generated by organic traffic
- Sites that rank organically are perceived as trustworthy—search engines are vouching for you
- Good medium for website and brand “discovery”—organic search can introduce you to shoppers
- Excellent medium for very specific searches, which typically have higher conversion

Why does SEO take time to yield results?

- Search engines want to deliver the best results, so they're not going to rank something overnight
- Trust is earned over time
- Competition varies—our internal SEO team sets the expectation that traction happens in 3-6 months, depending on the industry and state of the website

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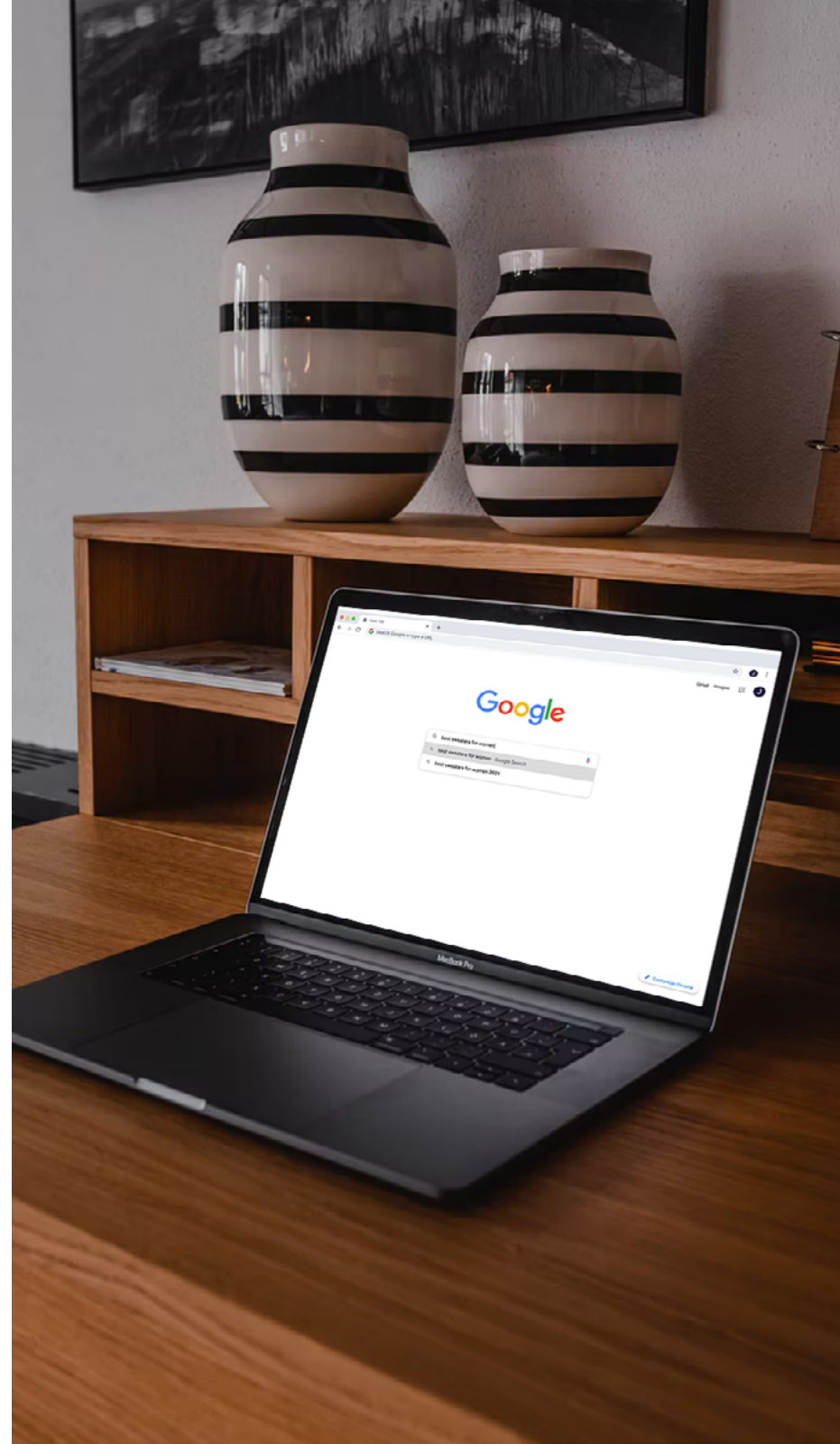
Build your SEO Strategy

PART 1

SEO for Online Stores

Search engine optimization (SEO) is a collection of marketing techniques aimed at building a website's authority, trust, and topical relevance—the three main components that search engines like Google use to determine a website's organic visibility. SEO for ecommerce is all about increasing organic traffic and revenue for relevant queries. It is not about “ranking” or gaming the search engines—there are no tricks here, just hard work.

Even the best SEO takes time to yield results, so we recommend pairing paid advertising and social media with your SEO strategy. The good news is that once SEO momentum builds, the payout is substantial and builds on its own success.

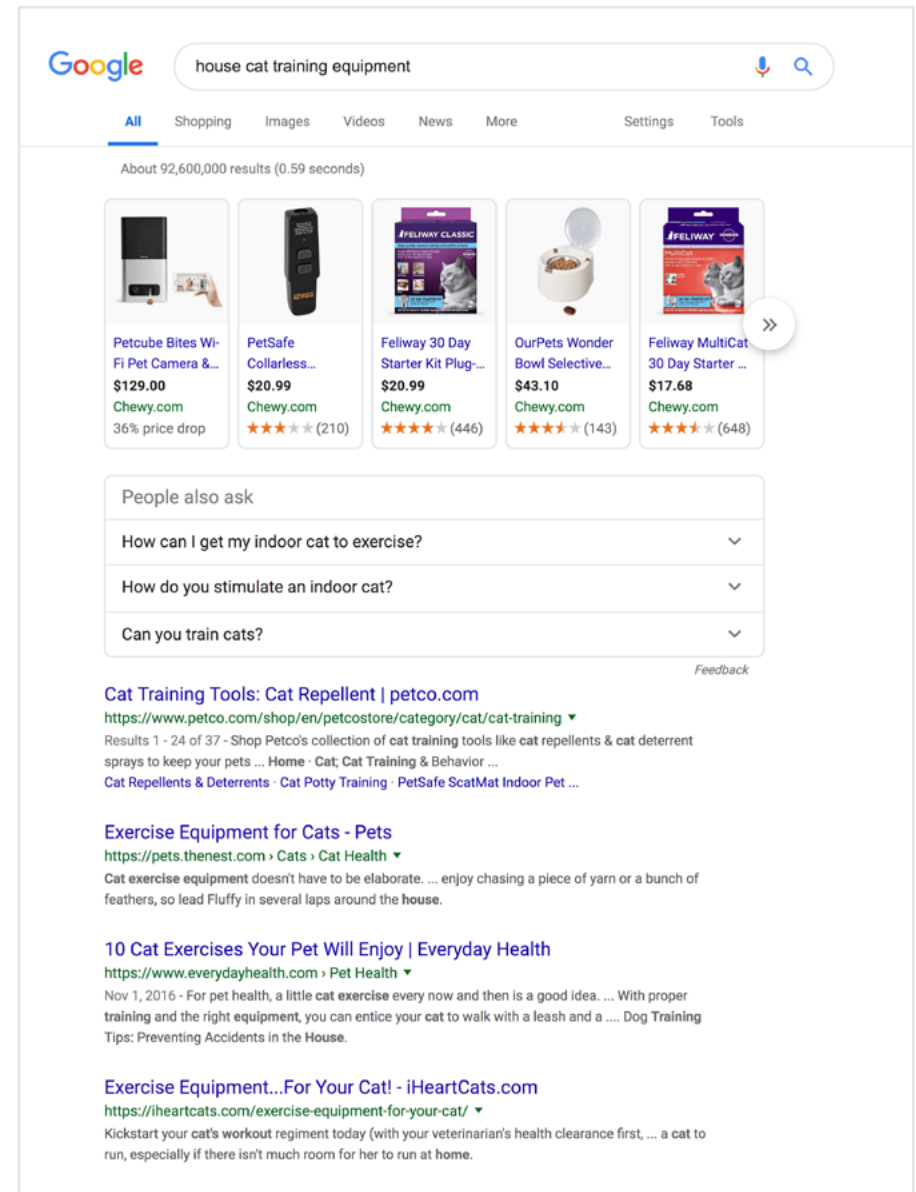


PART 1

a. The Search Engine Results Page (SERP)

Google has become the primary channel people use to search for products and information. For example, if you wanted to train your cat, you might use Google to search for “house cat training equipment,” and the returned Search Engine Results Page (SERP) would look like the image to the right.

All the listings below the Google Shopping ad images and paid ads are organic search results. Google believes these pages are most relevant to the above query. So how did Petco end up at the top of the results? The remainder of this guide will answer that question, along with providing best practices you can start implementing on your own site today.



b. On-Page vs. Off-Page SEO

Before we dive into specifics, it is important to note that SEO is often categorized into two groups, both of which are critical to search engine success.

On-Page Optimization:

This is the SEO work done on the website itself. It includes strategies like technical optimization, as well as increasing the website's relevance for appropriate keyword phrases by optimizing URLs, content, and meta tags. Effective on-page optimization allows search engines to easily determine the subject of each page and the site as a whole so that they can deliver the best landing page to users performing relevant searches.

Off-Page Optimization:

This refers to SEO activities that happen off the website. Some effective off-page SEO tactics include earning inbound links and citations, establishing the website as an authority in the industry, and building an active social media presence. From here on out, the information we provide will be an overview of the important aspects of search engine optimization from both an on- and off-page perspective.

Keyword Research

The first step in SEO is selecting your targeted keywords—the backbone of SEO. A “keyword” is a single or multi-word phrase that searchers use when trying to find your website or a specific page or product on your website. A site with pages optimized for industry-appropriate keyword terms will help send signals to search engines that your site is relevant for the phrase being searched by the user. This will help your site appear more frequently and more prominently in the SERPs.

Note: When we refer to “keywords,” we are not referring to the keyword meta tag. You can ignore the keyword meta tag, as it has not been used by search engines in years. In Part 4, we’ll cover how to utilize keywords correctly within your content. For now, we will focus on selecting keywords for your pages.



PART 2

a. Understand relevancy

Relevancy, or how closely related the content on your web page is to the keyword that was searched, is hands-down the most important factor in keyword selection. In other words, you'll need to make sure that the keywords you choose accurately reflect the content of your web page. Your cat training website might be for cat lovers, but "cat lovers" is not an appropriate keyword term for your website's homepage. "Feline training equipment" and "cat training supplies" are better options. Ask yourself what your target market would search for to seek out this page. If they are searching "cat lovers," we can guarantee that they are not looking for cat training equipment.

You should also consider the purpose of a page and where your customers are in the purchasing funnel before selecting keywords. If you have a large number of pages on your site that are more informational than product-driven, your keywords should reflect that. For example, if you have a page dedicated to cat leash training, you would want to target keywords that reflect that theme—such as "how to leash train your cat."

The screenshot shows a Google search for "cat agility products". The search bar at the top contains the text "cat agility products" and the Google logo. Below the search bar, there are tabs for "All", "Shopping", "Images", "Videos", "News", "More", "Settings", and "Tools". The "All" tab is selected. Below the tabs, it says "About 8,410,000 results (0.47 seconds)".

The first section is "See cat agility products" with a "Sponsored" label. It displays five product listings from Chewy.com:

- Trixie Mad Scientist Turn...**: \$17.09, 4.5 stars (1k+)
- PetChatz PawCall...**: \$79.99, Free shipping
- Outward Hound Zip & Zoom...**: \$21.39, 4.5 stars (51)
- EliteField 2-Door Soft-Sided Dog ...**: \$45.99, 4.5 stars (500)
- Trixie Activity Poker Box...**: \$17.99, 4.5 stars (364)

Below the sponsored products, there are organic search results:

- CFA Feline Agility - Agility Training For Your Cat**: agility.cfa.org/clicker-training.shtml. While cat agility is very new, it's gathering steam as it rolls through the CFA ... on the internet and pay big bucks for "official" tournament-grade agility equipment.
- It's trendy : cat agility - Meyou Paris**: <https://www.meyou-paris.com/en/blog/its-trendy-cat-agility-n41>. Aug 2, 2017 - If you want to create a cat agility course at home, you do not need to invest in expensive equipment. Use the objects of your daily life : a broom ...
- Cat Agility Equipment - Alibaba**: <https://www.alibaba.com> > Home & Garden > agility equipment. 12 products - Alibaba.com offers 12 cat agility equipment products. About 66% of these are pet training products. A wide variety of cat agility equipment options are ...
- 53 Best Cat Agility & Movings images | Pets, Dog cat, Cat room**: <https://www.pinterest.com/imacdragonfly/cat-agility-movings/>. Explore marianne /it's board "Cat Agility & Movings", followed by 296 people ... Exercise Cat Wheel from Sunnica Pet Products I wonder if the cats would use it.
- 13 Best Cat Agility and Training images | Agility training, I love cats, Pets**: <https://www.pinterest.com/trishmt/cat-agility-and-training/>

b. Develop a keyword hierarchy

When conducting keyword research, you need to think strategically about the layout and structure of your site. If you sell cat training equipment and supplies, you would want to categorize your site based on the different types of training, then target keywords for each area accordingly. The homepage would target broader terms like “cat training supplies,” whereas a deeper category page devoted to agility training might target “cat agility products.” Another category regarding cat leash training might target “cat leash training kit.”

Keyword hierarchy research involves structuring your keyword targeting to funnel from the broadest search term to the most specific. This is helpful in two main ways. First, it aligns your keyword phrases with the natural shopping process, providing a clearer experience for customers. Second, this clearer targeting and structure sends more accurate signals to search engines and gives you a better chance to appear in the search results for important terms.

To complete keyword hierarchy research, think of your website as a funnel. You’ll want to choose broad keywords for your homepage and top navigation categories, and then narrow down to more specific keywords on subcategories and product pages. Instead of relying so much on exact

match keywords, you’ll be clearly defining category structure. This clean structure leads to clarity, which makes both search engines and customers happy. You’ll also minimize competition within your own website’s pages; instead, all of your keywords will be organized consistently across the website, utilizing each relevant phrase in a single location.

c. Be descriptive

Long-tail keywords (i.e. highly descriptive ones) have increased in importance over the last decade, and this trend is not slowing. People are becoming more descriptive in how they search, and your keywords should adjust accordingly. To account for this, don’t target “cat supplies”—target “cat training supplies.” Increase the descriptive nature of the keywords as you get closer to product pages. Not only will you help deliver the right page to a user’s search query, but you’ll have a much better chance of ranking for more specific phrases than generic ones. The best part is that these long-tail queries convert at a much higher rate.

d. Spy on the competition

Millions of businesses review their competitors to gain a better understanding of where they may have cornered the market. Review your competitors' websites to see what sort of site structure and keywords they may be using on their site and develop a strategy that fits your site. If you see that a competitor's content is weak for a keyword they're ranking well for, write better content and outrank them.

e. Stay focused

We recommend targeting one primary keyword (the most important keyword for that page) and two to four secondary keywords (related keywords or variants of your primary keyword) per page. Make sure to use each of these variants at least once on the page, but don't overdo it by keyword stuffing, or overloading a page with keywords to try to manipulate search engines. Keep the copy you use natural-sounding so that a person reading it won't think it sounds strange.

f. Capitalize on what's already working

If your website is already generating some organic traffic, the best strategy is usually to use Google Search Console to identify the keywords that are driving traffic to a page. Find any non-branded keywords (keywords that don't include your brand name within them) that are driving significant traffic to your pages, and look at the organic rankings of your site for those keywords. If you're not ranking in Position 1 for a keyword or don't have the rich snippet (if one is present), you'll want to prioritize that keyword for SEO optimization. Improving the organic rankings of keywords that are already driving traffic but for which you don't rank in Position 1 is one of the most effective ways to get quick SEO results.

On-Page Content

Now that you have a keyword strategy in place, you need to fill your various web pages with unique and descriptive content that naturally incorporates the appropriate keywords. This is where on-page content comes in. Both the content (headlines, copy, images, etc.) on the page and the source code (like metadata) are considered on-page SEO factors. We'll focus on the content in this section and the source code in Part 4.

The end-goal of on-page content is twofold: provide customers with information about the products or page while providing search engines with more signals as to what your site's pages are about.



a. Serve the page's purpose

Content should be written with an end-goal in mind to meet the user's needs. Ask yourself:

- What sort of content and design will be the most useful to your users?
- What part of the purchase funnel is this visitor in?
- Is the purpose of the page to explain how easy it is to leash train your cat, or are you trying to convince them to add a cat leash training kit to their cart?

Unique content should be created to serve the page's purpose and direct the right kind of traffic to the page. All pages should have a clear Call to Action (CTA) that tells your visitors what to do next. For editorial content, such as a blog post, your CTAs should direct readers to product pages or other "down funnel" content. For product pages or product-centric content, the CTA will probably be to buy a product.

BUY NOW

ADD TO CART

LEARN MORE

BOOK NOW

PART 3

b. Avoid duplicate content

Content duplicated from page to page on a site or duplicated between websites not only confuses search engines as to which of your website's pages are most relevant to a query; it also often leads to diminished search engine visibility, meaning less website traffic and fewer sales. Google has developed an arm of its search algorithm to specifically root out sites with duplicate content.

If you are a reseller of goods from a manufacturer, do not copy and paste content they have on their site's category and product pages. While it may be tempting to borrow a well-written description of a product or range of products, it will ultimately negatively impact your site's organic visibility. While writing unique descriptions for your category and product pages may seem daunting, it is a beneficial process. Approach it by writing descriptions for your best-selling products or most frequently-visited pages first and work your way through the rest of your website.



c. Supplement with secondary media

Shoppers crave information and reassurance. Provide them with thorough descriptions, multiple images, and even videos (which are great for ecommerce SEO). Consider developing a how-to video via YouTube and embed it onto the most relevant product page. Optimize your YouTube videos with keyword-minded titles and descriptions. Not only do these videos make their way into Google search results, but YouTube is a search engine all on its own. Videos do not need to be professionally produced to be effective. Simply produce a video in a well-lit area with a clear picture and audible sound.

Category pages can also feature YouTube videos by using the embed feature directly from YouTube, which provides you with a small piece of HTML code to add to your page.

DETAILS

PRODUCT DESCRIPTION:

ALEKO's 8.4 Foot Inflatable Air Boat is a high performance, heavy duty sport boat that can be used in both saltwater and freshwater. The air mat floor is cleverly designed with thousands of criss-crossing polyester threads that allow the boat to be inflated to a high pressure, proving just as tough and rigid as a conventional wood floor. This boat is extremely portable, lightweight, and easy to assemble, making it an excellent choice for fishing, diving trips, river rafting, camping, tending fishing boats and simply enjoying time on the water.

This inflatable boat is ready to use right out of the box with the included aluminum oars, however if you prefer a motorized boat it can accommodate two- and four-stroke motors with a max weight of 75 pounds. This boat has been tested and designed to fit both 15-inch short shaft outboard motors as well as 20-inch long shaft motors. We recommend a 15-inch short shaft outboard for optimal performance.

This boat has multiple built-in features to guarantee the best user experience on and off the water for durability, usability, setup, transport and storage. Some convenient features include a rope grab line for carrying and stability, an all-around durable rubber strike to prevent damage, and two built-in handles. This boat also includes three air chambers to protect your boat in the event of an air leak.

This boat is 8.4 feet long with an overall width of 4.6 feet and a height of 1.6 feet. The inner dimension of the boat is 1 foot, 11 inches with a transom width of 2 feet and a transom height of 9.5 inches. This boat's tube circumference is 3.6 feet with a tube diameter of 1.5 feet.

Each inflatable boat includes: 8.4 foot inflatable boat with air flooring, a plywood bench seat, (2) aluminum oars, a foot pump, (3) air chambers, (2) mounted carrying handles, tie down straps for battery boxes and gas tanks (battery box and gas tanks not included), a grab line, a carrying and storage bag, oar locks, oar holders and a pre-packaged repair kit (glue not included).

FEATURES:

- ALEKO 8.4 Foot Inflatable Boat with Air Floors in Red and Black
- Boat Includes: a plywood bench seat, (2) aluminum oars, a foot pump, (2) mounted carrying handles, (3) air chambers, tie-down straps for battery boxes and gas tanks (battery box and gas tank not included), carrying/storage bag, inflatable air floors, oar locks and oar holders, a pre-packaged repair kit (glue not included), a grab line, a rubber strike
- Boat Material: 0.9mm reinforced polyester and anti-corrosive PVC / Floor: Air mat floor with interlocking polyester - as durable and rigid as wood floors but extra lightweight
- Max Load: 770 pounds / Max Persons: 3 people / Boat Net Weight: 86 pounds / Motor: Can accommodate up to 75 pounds
- Color: Red and Black



d. Optimize your homepage

Your homepage has two purposes: to make it clear to users what your site offers, and to make it clear to search engines what your site offers. To optimize your homepage meta elements, try using the following guidelines:

Title Tag: (Primary Keyword | Business Name).

Example: Cat Training Equipment | CatAgilityPros.com

Meta Description: These aren't used by search engines for ranking purposes, so focus on enticing users to visit your site. For your homepage, it's usually best to describe what your business does and why it's the best choice for customers.

Example: Cat Agility Pros is the #1 cat agility supplier in North America. We have been providing cat agility, training, and travel supplies since 1929.

H1: If your homepage has an H1, it should also target your primary keyword. It's also usually best to include a trust signal or CTA within your homepage H1.

Example: Improve Your Cat's Health and Behavior with Cat Agility Training

e. Optimize your category pages

Within your category pages, it's best to focus on long-tail keywords to improve your chances of ranking. Short-tail keywords (1-2 words) such as "women's pajamas" have high search volumes, but tend to also be higher-competition, and are usually dominated by the largest companies with the largest budgets. Longer-tail keywords (3+ words) such as "silk women's luxury pajamas" have lower search volumes, but make up for this by being much less competitive and having higher purchase intent.

In a rush to attract as much organic traffic as possible, many store owners start targeting keywords that are too broad and competitive in nature. An easy solution to this problem is to switch gears, define a target market, and focus keywords based around your target audience. Some quick tips for this can include:

Develop an authentic understanding of your market and industry.

You may want to focus on an untapped segment in a competitive market, a completely new market, a market in a specific geographic area, or a completely exclusive market. Once you define your market, define what your audience thinks, reads, visits, or has an interest in.

PART 3

Incorporate terms that specifically apply to your target segment in your keyword research.

For example, rather than targeting a general term like “cat leash,” you might target a more descriptive and target-market appropriate keyword like “cat training harness” or “cat agility harness.” These phrases not only more accurately describe the products, but they also frame the product in the context and language of your target market. They are also far less competitive and further down the purchasing funnel, meaning these phrases will convert better.

Include useful content on category pages.

Your goal should be to answer common questions and instruct the visitor on what to do next. Explain the difference between major brands, or call out the most popular models. Do not simply write filler copy for search engines. Above all, do not just write a generic description that goes on all category pages, even if you dynamically change the category name. Here are a few examples of the difference between useful content and “SEO copy” on category pages:

Bad

Generic copy with dynamic insertion of the category name.

Example: This is our Car Stereo category, where you can find car Pioneer, JVC, Sony, Alpine, and other great Car Stereo brands.

Better

Custom-written SEO copy for each category.

Example: At Acme Electronics, you'll find great deals on car stereos from the best brands, including Pioneer, JVC, Sony, and Alpine.

Best

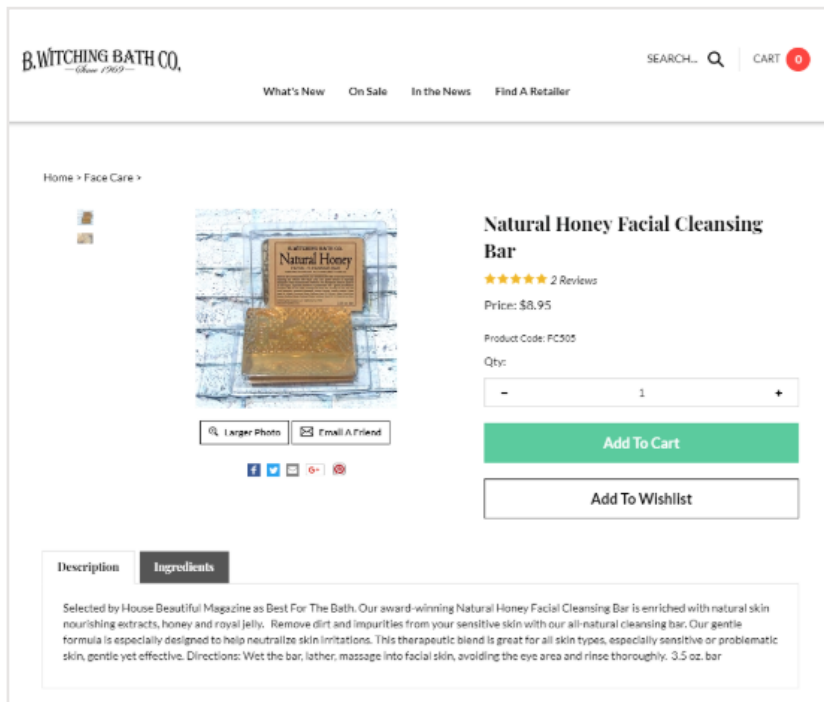
Custom-written copy that helps the visitor purchase.

Example: Acme Electronics carries an enormous variety of car stereos, ranging from entry-level options under \$100 (e.g. Axxera, Clarion, Lightning Audio) to top-of-the-line models from JVC, Kenwood, and Pioneer featuring GPS navigation, touch screens, bluetooth, satellite radio, Pandora, and more. With so many options, choosing a car stereo can be a daunting task. That's why we've put together the car stereo buying guide below to help you choose the right price, features, and installation kit for your needs.

PART 3

f. Optimize your product pages

Your product pages themselves are one of the most important parts of the purchase funnel, so getting customers there is imperative. Follow these strategies to ensure that your product pages are set up for success.



Ditch the manufacturer-written product descriptions.

You already know that having no content on your product pages is not ideal because users rely on product descriptions to learn about an item and make an informed decision. Rather than send users off with no information, many ecommerce sites rely on manufacturer descriptions, which contain all the relevant product information they need in an easy, cut-and-paste package. However, when Google detects duplicate content, it picks one “canonical” version to index rather than indexing multiple versions of the same content. Your copy-and-paste product descriptions will probably not be indexed by search engines, making it virtually impossible to rank for the keywords you’re targeting.

Create unique, conversion-focused content for each product.

Manufacturer descriptions usually aren't written with conversions in mind. As you begin writing your own product descriptions, ask yourself questions about what would compel your customer to purchase the product:

- What can it uniquely offer them?
- How can it make their life better or easier?
- What features does the product provide that similar products don't?
- Does your shop offer the product at a lower price than the competition, or provide other incentives like free shipping?

Try a few different calls to action and description styles while varying your word count to see which type and amount of copy converts the best.

Prioritize your products to optimize and perform keyword research simultaneously.

As you decide which products to focus on first, you'll probably consider factors like which ones bring in the highest revenue, which ones adhere best to your personal

priorities for your ecommerce shop, which ones are already popular, and which ones should be popular but aren't. All of these are critical factors, so address these first.

Once you're done, it's time to perform keyword research. The products you'll want to tackle next are the ones that have the highest search volume and the most reasonable amount of competition. Test out a large number of the brands and models you sell in Google Ads' Keyword Planner tool to check on volume, find the products that are getting the most widely searched, and then examine the SERPs to scope out who's ranking. You've found your new targets.

Include long-tail keywords in product descriptions.

Long-tail keywords are so specific that their search volume is negligible, but the people who do make those searches are in it to win it—and by “win,” we mean “buy.” If you get one person to land on your product and convert, that's better than 1,000 people landing on your product and not converting. A product's model and product number are the obvious places to start with long-tail keywords, but also think outside the box and choose descriptors or qualities people might be searching for.

PART 3

Focus on UX before SEO.

UX (user experience) is the unsung hero of SEO. While SEO works mainly to appease search engines, a strong UX leads to happier customers and site visitors. When it comes to optimizing the UX on your website, it's important to place yourself into a site visitor's shoes. Ask:

- What are they seeing when they first land on your homepage?
- Are they bombarded with a "sign up for our email list" three seconds after landing on your site?
- Are they able to easily navigate to a specific category they're searching for?
- Are there multiple call-to-action buttons that draw the eye away from a product image?

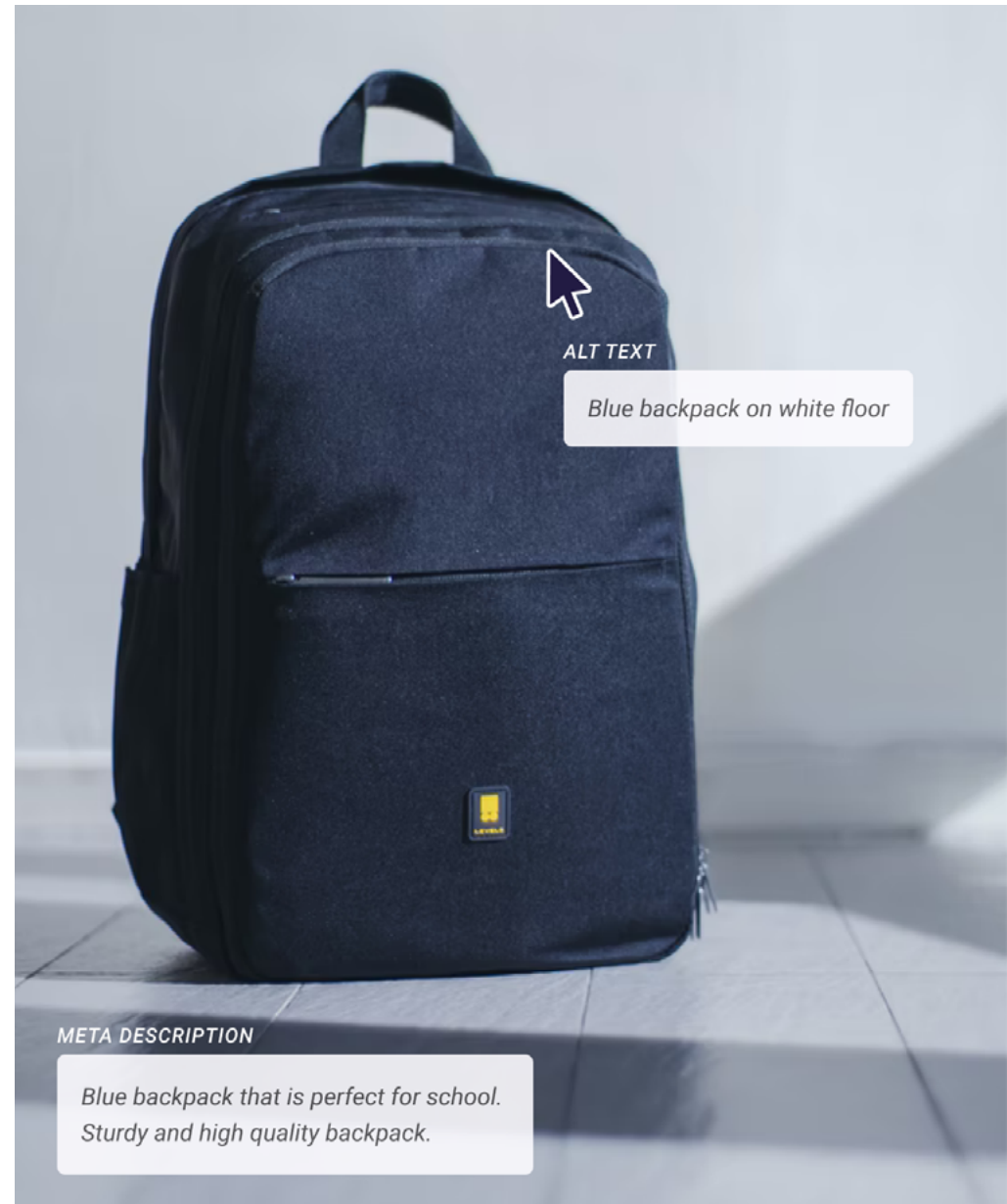
The best way for you to improve UX is to shop your website with an unbiased eye. Ensure it's easy to understand, easy to use, and even easier to shop.



Metadata

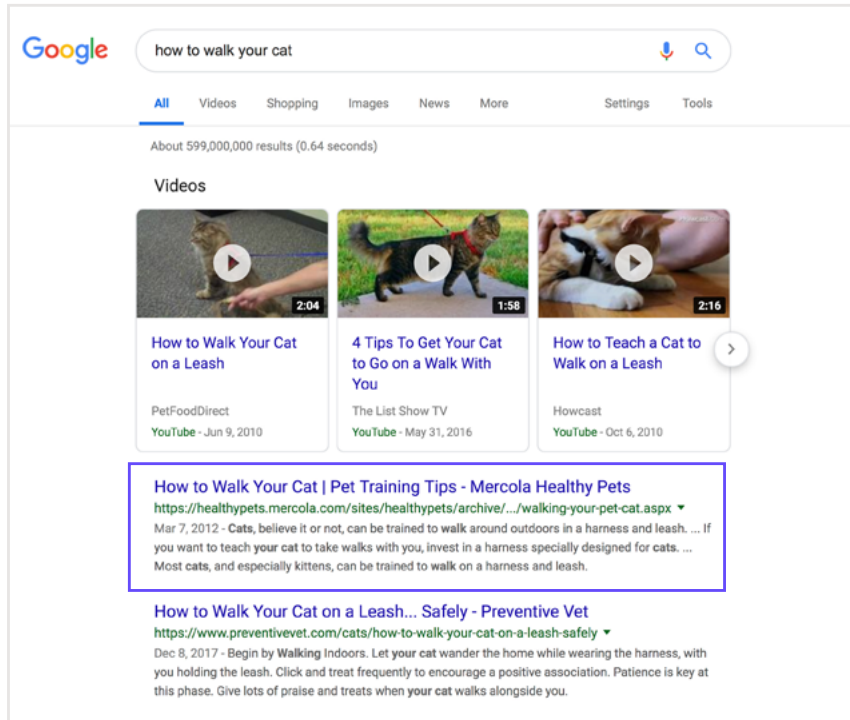
Well-written meta title tags and descriptions, category and product URLs, and photo alt tags are also extremely important on-page SEO factors in ecommerce. While not entirely visible to the end user at all times, they are the keys to helping search engines begin to determine the relevancy of a page.

Focus specifically on the content of your title tags, meta descriptions, URLs, and photo alt text to complete your on-page SEO strategy.



a. Title Tags

A title tag is the title of the page and arguably the most important SEO real estate on a page, so when it comes to SEO, this is an area well worth your time and energy. While not visible on the page, title tags will appear on the clickable tab at the top of your browser and serve as the title of search results in the form of a blue, clickable link.



In the SERP example on the left, PetSafe's title tag is "How To Walk Your Cat: It's Easier Than You Think | PetSafe® Articles." This is not a bad title tag as it contains the keyword phrase "walk your cat," though we might adjust it to read "How To Walk Your Cat on a Leash | Cat Leash Training Tips" for a bit more keyword relevancy.

Meta title tags are generally keyword-focused and succinctly describe what the page is about. Search engines very regularly list results based on what a page's meta title tag says, among other things. Use a root keyword that accurately describes the entire page's offering and supplement it with secondary keywords using a hyphen or a vertical bar.

The key here is to be specific about what the page offers. Simply saying "leash training" in the title tag would be missing the mark—it's too broad and doesn't help search engines understand what the page is about. A title tag should be around 600 pixels in length or 50-60 characters. Title tags that are too long will be cut off by the SERP and the end of the tag will be replaced with an ellipsis, potentially removing important words from the view of the web user.

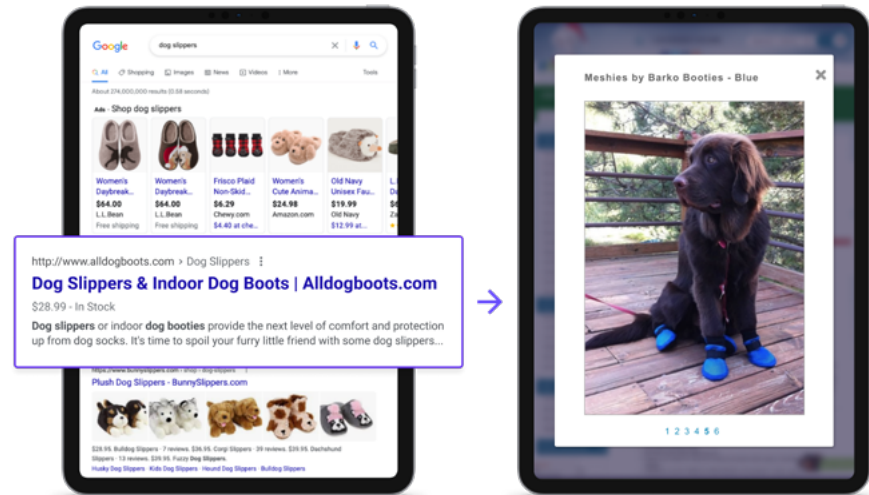
PART 4

b. Meta descriptions

Like the title tag, the meta description is not visible on your website but appears in SERPs—it is the marketing copy that appears beneath the meta title tag. Its purpose is to reaffirm what your page is about and convince the searcher to click through to your page versus another listing. Your meta descriptions are not used by search engines for ranking purposes (though matching keywords will be bolded in the search results) and should convey the value of your products or some sort of edge you have over your competition. We found this meta description compelling:

Dog slippers or indoor dog booties provide the next level of comfort and protection up from dog socks. It's time to spoil your furry little friend with some dog slippers...

If you're optimizing for mobile traffic, try to keep your meta descriptions shorter than 120 characters (680px) in length. SERPs pages on desktop show longer meta descriptions, usually about 160 characters (920px).



It's also possible that Google will replace the meta description you worked so hard on with other on-page content that it deems to be most relevant to the query. If you see meta descriptions in the SERPs that don't match what you wrote, don't panic—it just means Google has decided that something else on the page was more relevant. To fix this, you can rewrite your meta description to be more relevant to the query.

Use a Google SERP optimization tool like Portent to craft your title tags and meta descriptions before you place them on your site.

c. Optimized URLs

Optimizing your category and product URLs is a simple way to organize your pages and provide your customers with reassurance that they have reached the right page. It is also another tool for search engines to index the pages of your site and potentially list you in a SERP.

Additionally, properly optimized URLs will aid in paid search efforts such as pay-per-click advertising (PPC) and comparison shopping engines (Shopping Feeds) where product URLs are predominantly displayed. Use keywords specific to the category or product in question when you optimize a URL, and keep them succinct so as to avoid confusing-looking URLs. Likewise, avoid punctuation, which will result in unwanted dashes and a confusing URL.

d. Photo alt text tags

Adding alt text to your images will also provide you with a small relevancy boost. The purpose of this tag is to provide your product images with improved accessibility for sight-impaired users, as well as an added boost for any end user conducting an image search.

Since search engines cannot currently “see” images, the Photo Alt Text field is an important section to address to make sure your products are as visible as possible. Treat this field simply as a way to describe the product in question, similar to the meta title tag. Try to use your targeted keywords within your image alt text while also describing the content of the image.

Blogging

An engaging blog is an effective way to establish your site as an industry authority, build your website's topical relevance, and increase the amount of content related to and associated with your site. All of these factors will also go a long way toward boosting your website's organic searchability.

Not sure how to get started with a blog for your ecommerce store? We'll walk you through some steps and best practices so that you can begin blogging with confidence.



The screenshot shows the homepage of 'THE SAUSAGE MAKER' website. The header features a red gear logo with a white dot pattern and the text 'THE SAUSAGE MAKER' in bold. Below the logo is a navigation bar with links: Sausage, Processing, Ham & Bacon, Kitchen, Spices, Preserving, Brew/Wine, Cheesemaking, Outdoors, and Smokin' Deals. The main content area has a date 'Tuesday, January 29, 2019' and a red button 'VISIT OUR STORE'. The featured article is titled 'THE SAUSAGE MAKER GUIDE TO SUPER BOWL FOOD' in red. The text of the article discusses the Super Bowl and provides a recipe for 'Creamy Queso Blanco'. A small image of the queso dip is shown at the bottom left of the article.

THE SAUSAGE MAKER

Sausage Processing Ham & Bacon Kitchen Spices Preserving Brew/Wine Cheesemaking Outdoors Smokin' Deals

Tuesday, January 29, 2019

THE SAUSAGE MAKER GUIDE TO SUPER BOWL FOOD

The Big Game is less than a week away, and while the Rams and Patriots are making final preparations for Super Bowl LIII, The Sausage Maker team has created a recipe game plan for hosting parties. Fans of the other 30 teams that came up short can still enjoy the game among friends and family and replace feelings of disappointment with delicious party food. If you're still looking for crowd-pleasing menu items, try one- or all - of our favorite Super Bowl recipes below!

Players don't jump into full-speed play without stretching and warmups, so why would the fans? One of the most important parts of a football party spread is the finger-food appetizers that can be enjoyed all game long. You likely have your favorite appetizers that include buffalo wings, chili and sliders, but why not add a new item to the mix?

Creamy Queso Blanco

Homemade queso dip is an easy-to-make game changer that can be customized with toppings of your choice. It all starts with white American cheese slices from the supermarket's deli counter. Melt the cheese on low on a stovetop, stirring in milk until the

VISIT OUR STORE

CATEGORIES

- Bbq Recipes
- Butchers
- Cooking For A Crowd
- Cured Ham
- Diy Food
- Diy Food Recipes
- DIY Smoked Ham
- Dry Cured Ham
- Dry Curing
- Eat Local
- Gift Guides
- Ham Brine
- How To Make Cider

a. Choose a blogging platform

Two of the most common blogging platforms are [WordPress](#) and [Blogger](#). WordPress offers more customization options and many users find it easier to use and navigate through, while Blogger is a Google-owned service that can be a bit more restricted in its functionality. Ultimately, your blogging platform comes down to personal preference.

b. Blog regularly

For your blog to take hold and start garnering new visitors and engagement, it needs to be updated regularly. Try to establish a regular publication schedule so that users know when to look forward to new content. When a blog-worthy topic comes to light, take the time to write about it as soon as possible so you can capture any of the hype traffic associated with it.

c. Blog with a purpose

A blog that includes hundreds of blog posts that add no value to your website or your customers is missing the mark. Blog about topics that are important to your target market, website, and industry. Use it to answer common questions, comment on current trends, or provide more information about topics that could use further explanation.

d. Use visual cues

Blog articles with an image are more likely to be viewed and read by users than a text-only article. Use this opportunity to add topic-specific images to your blog. If you've created an infographic or video that would work for the article, include it as well. Just make sure the images are of good quality and something people would want to engage with—and potentially share.

You can use services like [iStock](#) or [Shutterstock](#) for royalty-free images that you can include on blog posts. [Canva](#) is another great service for creating header images for blog posts so that they are more visually stimulating when you share them on social media channels. Lastly, consider a service like [Piktochart](#) or [Venngage](#) to produce attractive, professional infographics.

e. Promote your blog across multiple channels

A well-written and thoughtful blog post is pointless if no one knows it exists. Once you've posted your article, video, or infographic, let your customers know about it by promoting it on social media channels like Facebook or Twitter. This will put more eyes on the post and doubles as a chance to provide unique content to your social media channels, which can pull in new followers.

f. Organize an on-site resource library

Your industry may have a lot of questions that naturally come with it, or you may find yourself dealing with a regular stream of customer questions. If you have several topics that would make sense being posted on your site rather than a blog, a resource library may be a good option for you. If you sell cat training supplies, for example, a "How To" library would provide genuine value to your target market. Developing such resources not only helps your customers, but also increases the discoverability of your website.



Social Media

Social media has long been a necessary component of effective ecommerce SEO campaigns. It provides a voice for your brand, allows you to connect with current and potential customers in real time, and serves as a powerful link building tool. Because of this, you should incorporate social media into your SEO strategy to make the most of the content you have.

Social media itself is a multifaceted concept requiring its own specific strategies, but we'll focus here on ways to incorporate it into your SEO strategy.



a. Use content to strengthen your SEO strategy

Keep these content considerations in mind when beginning to integrate social media into your SEO toolkit:

Make a list of social keywords to create content ideas and build an editorial calendar.

Social keywords are the phrases and terms people use in conversation that relate to your products, industry, and customer interests. Social keywords are typically different from search keywords because people use search engines when they're looking for an answer to a question or solution to a problem, whereas people use social media for social interaction. [Google Analytics](#) will tell you which search keywords are already driving traffic to your site. You can also use Twitter and Facebook's search functions to analyze conversations happening in real time.

Commit to writing content for your blog

Release compelling content on a consistent schedule, then share it on your social media channels. Blog posts can address common questions, pique customer interest, or relay exciting industry news—and you don't have to stop there. As mentioned in Part 5, your blog can also use infographics, videos, and more to reach your readers. Don't be afraid to repurpose content and experiment with generated content—the key here is to ensure the content will be viewed as valuable and engaging so that it compels people to like, retweet, or share it with their own network.

Make your content shareable

If you don't have them already, implement social media share buttons on appropriate pages. Discover where your audience hangs out online, create profiles, and build solid relationships with them. Also, always encourage engagement by asking for the like, retweet, share, etc. by initiating ongoing, two-way conversations and by asking a lot of questions.

PART 6

Get creative

Don't be afraid to think outside of the box. Many people find that guest blogging, online contests, engaging with like-minded individuals, and activities that surprise their audience really help in building trust and increasing social mentions as well as online traffic.

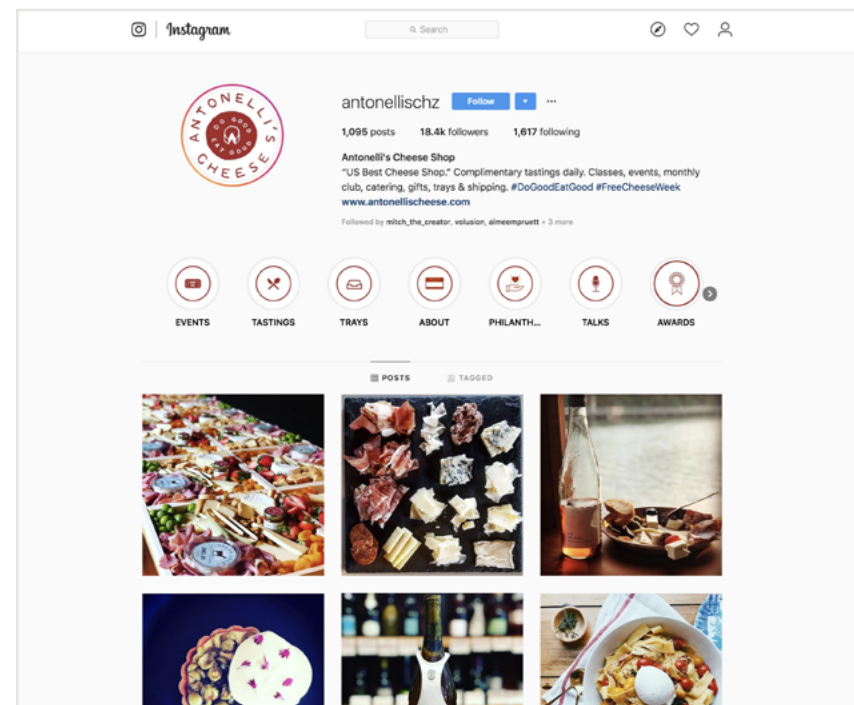
b. Use posts to drive traffic to your website

While Google isn't upfront about every item on the list of ranking factors they use to determine a website's authority, most SEO professionals believe website traffic plays a role. [Research from Cognitive SEO](#) backs this up—when one of their blog posts got picked up by Reddit, it drove a huge amount of traffic to the website. That same day, their ranking for a competitive keyword (“google images”) flew from page eight to page one.

When people come to your website, Google takes notice. But people can only visit pages they know about. When you publish new content on your website, promote it to your followers on social media. If you don't have much of a following yet, consider paying for ads on social media to get more clicks.

Over time, sharing your great content on your social media feeds will do more than increase your traffic—it will also help you build authority. When people see your website as a trusted source, they're more likely to share your stuff and link back to it. Traffic today can help, but authority in the months and years to come helps more.

You can also use your website to help drive more interaction with your social channels so your SEO boosts your social efforts. Make sure all of your social profiles are easy for visitors to find if they want to follow you, and encourage people who read your content to share it—click-to-tweet software to make shares especially easy. Other people sharing your content can help you gain both shares and traffic—it's a marketing win all around.



PART 6

c. Use engagement to build new content

Crowdsourcing content can both make the content creation process easier and get more of your followers actively engaged with your content. Social media channels provide a number of tools you can use to get input from your followers that you can repurpose into content on your website.

Both Twitter and Facebook make it easy to set up polls for your followers. You can then incorporate the answers they provide into relevant blog posts. This data can lend credence to the arguments you make while giving poll participants more of a reason to care about the post.

Most social media platforms also provide easy-to-use embed codes for including status updates in your blog posts as well. Incorporating the social media comments of your followers and influencers in your industry can make your posts stronger and give the people you mention an incentive to share the posts with their own networks.

Building content around social engagement puts your audience at the center of your content and helps you create a sense of community on your website. That can help lead to more shares, links, and traffic—all of which boost SEO.



d. Use listening to observe your audience

A good SEO strategy requires trying to get inside the heads of your target audience. Keyword research is all about learning what language they use and the topics they're interested in. Social media is another rich source for learning about the questions your audience has, the topics they're interested in, and the things they complain about.

Spend time on social media looking through what your followers are posting and the language they use. Then use that information to better shape your SEO strategy. You may be able to pull more accurate keywords from social media research, and you can find good topics to cover in your content that you know your audience is interested in.

A lot of audience research depends on third-party sources that aggregate data. Social media is one of the best ways to directly tap into what your audience is doing and saying.

PART 6

e. Use profiles to connect with influencers and site owners

Social media is all about relationships, and a lot of what results in good SEO is also tied to relationships. You'll get more visits and links if people know and care who you are—reputation goes a long way with SEO.

Social media is a prime tool for making the connections that help. You can use social media to interact with influencers in your industry—getting on their radar is the first step to an eventual collaboration or relationship. You can also use social media to reach out to relevant contacts to request help promoting pieces you're especially proud of. Additionally, you can use it to start connecting with the bloggers and website owners in your industry so you're not cold contacting them when you do link building outreach.

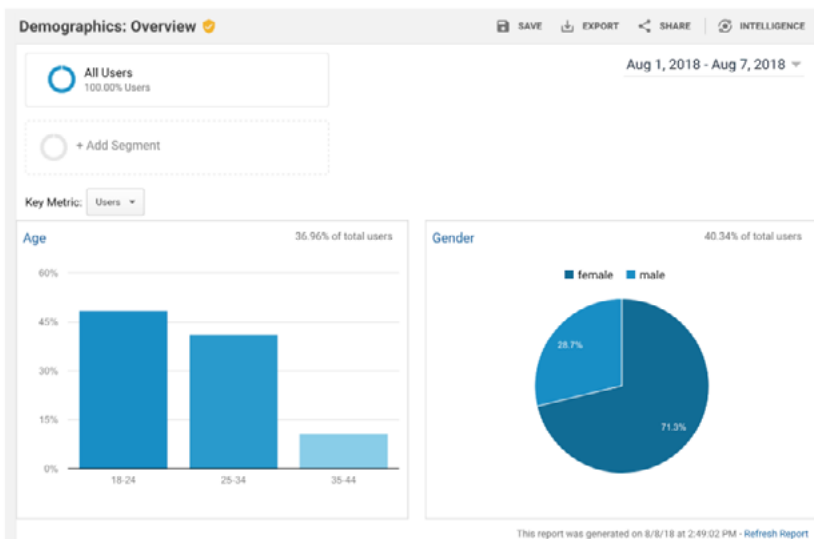
You can also turn to your social media connections when you need sources for your content. Frequently, someone who is mentioned as an expert source in a piece will share it with their own networks, spreading the reach of your content.



PART 6

f. Use SEO analytics to shape your social strategy

Just like social media research can improve your SEO strategy, SEO analytics offer important information you can put toward your social media strategy. Several types of data you collect to measure your SEO results apply here, including:



Audience data. Google Analytics provides information on the demographics of your visitors, as well as their interests. Knowing information like gender, age, and other topics your visitors like will help you make sure your social media is geared toward the right audience.

The pages that get the most views and engagement.

Google Analytics also provides detailed data about which pages on your website people visit the most often, and how long they spend on the site once there. When you know what content your audience likes most, you can make sure your social shares reflect those interests.

Conversion data. Knowing what content your audience likes matters, but it's even more important to know the types of content that ultimately get the main results you want. Google Analytics allows you to track conversions such as purchases, email signups, or form submissions. The content that most often leads to conversions should get shared more often, and the types of followers it attracts should be especially valued in crafting your social strategy.

Link Building & Networking

Word-of-mouth advertising works by having others vouch for the products or services you offer and spreading good information about you. Networking with websites related to yours and earning links from other sites pointing to yours are digital ways to use word-of-mouth advertising.

For your website to thrive, you need to develop relationships with other sites in your industry and gain reputable, high-quality links back to your domain. This may be the most difficult piece of SEO for ecommerce, but it yields the greatest results.

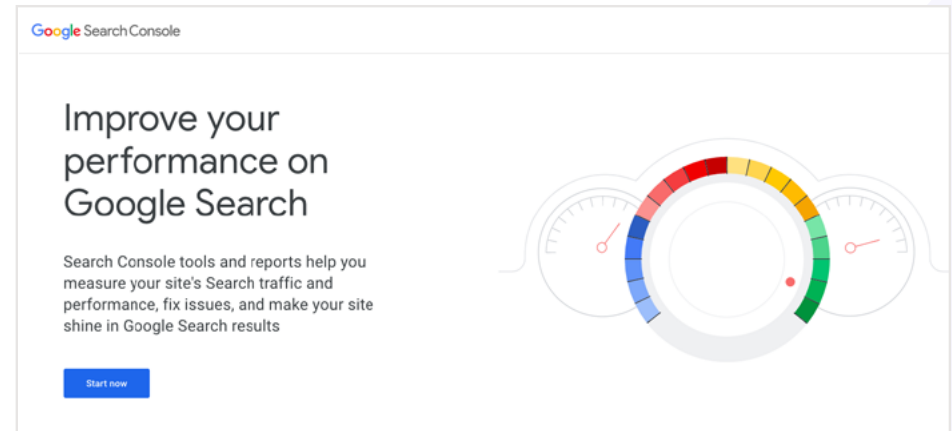


a. Rebuild broken links or request updates

Industry websites may link to a related website to add context to their pages or articles, and those links will occasionally become outdated and return as a 404 error page. If you have a comparable link, you can reach out to webmasters and offer them a replacement link for their broken one. Use tools like Moz's Open Site Explorer, Ahrefs, and Screaming Frog to find websites with 404 errors on their outbound links.

There is a chance that another website is referencing you in their web copy but isn't linking to you. By reaching out to them and asking for a link to your website, you can make sure mentions of your brand are properly linked. You can use Moz's Open Site Explorer or Google Alerts to find any mentions of your brand. Google Search Console is also a great resource for seeing what sort of inbound links your site has from outside sources.

In 2017, many link networks were identified and penalized by Google. If you bought links from a link network, chances are you were penalized too. Instead of buying links, explore what enthusiasts in your industry are talking about in terms of Blogs, Forums, Social Media, and Email Lists.



Blogs: If you sell dog products, a good outreach strategy would be to get to know dog lover bloggers. Reach out to them and ask about their advertising guidelines, content promotion options, or other ways to promote your brand on their site seamlessly. Finding these blogs isn't hard—start with a simple search in Google or use search operators like this in Google to find them: *dog lovers inurl:blog* or modify with your Keyword *inurl:blog*.

Forums: Participate in forums, but don't spam. Forum owners are well aware of shameless plugs and can ban you entirely from their community. Instead, get in touch with forum owners, find out how they handle promoted content, and work out a partnership that can benefit both parties. Using our dog example, you could start discovering these forums by typing *dog lovers inurl:forum* or modify with your Keyword *inurl:-forum*.

Social Media: Find out what successful social media players in your space are doing. Identify the kinds of content that gets shared and then try to build your own innovative versions. If you are just starting out or looking to increase your fan base, many social media sites like Facebook offer great advertising platforms.

Email Lists: Reach out to your existing contacts and help build new fans and lifetime customers. Make them aware of your presence on social media sites and your content strategy plans like your new blog.

b. Diversify your links

Look for variety in your link sources, anchor text, and link types. Repetitive anchor text—the text used in the hyperlink back to your site—was once a common SEO practice. If you wanted to rank well for “wooden birdhouses,” you used that exact phrase in your backlinks at every opportunity. As with many practices in the field, use became abuse, and website owners should now proceed with caution. Diversify your anchor text and be sure to occasionally link using your brand name or domain name instead of a competitive keyword.

c. Vary your link types

There are two types of links: dofollow links, which instruct search engines to pass authority along to the target page, and nofollow links, which instruct search engines to ignore the link. While dofollow links seem preferable, it is important for your link profile to have a natural appearance, and search engines can still make associations between your site and another even if the link is labeled “nofollow.” Even when your site only gets mentioned and no link is used at all, this can still benefit your rankings. Moz has discovered many pages that rank for terms based on these mentions, or co-citations, alone.

d. Offer expertise to bloggers

Reach out to industry bloggers and other websites and offer to write them a piece of content that they can feature on their site. You’ll be lending your expertise to a topic that reinforces you as a trusted resource in your industry, while they’ll receive a free piece of great content for their site and credit you and your website for the information.



Digital Marketing

Most successful online stores are successful because they diversify their marketing efforts; putting all your eggs in one basket is a risk. Supplement your SEO efforts with additional marketing tactics—such as email marketing, Pay-Per-Click (PPC) advertising, and Shopping Feeds—to gain quick traffic to your site.

Many SEOs believe that paid efforts also help boost ecommerce SEO results because the resulting traffic provides more context for the search engines. Many SEO best practices will benefit paid search advertising, and there is a known correlation between improved SEO rankings and an active presence in paid search advertising.

a. PPC Advertising

Pay-Per-Click ads help target and bring in motivated buyers who are ready to make a purchase today. With concisely written text ads that convey benefits and/or price advantages that your product has over the competition, PPC ads can get qualified traffic to your website quickly. You can manage your PPC campaigns on your own.

Show only

Available nearby ☐

New items ☐

Price

Up to \$25 ☐

\$25 – \$50 ☐

\$50 – \$80 ☐

Over \$80 ☐

\$ to \$

GO

Category

Cat Beds ☐

Dog Houses ☐

Dog Beds ☐


Cat Trees ☐

Seller


Amazon.com ☐

BestReviews ☐


Chewy.com ☐



Frisco Dog & Cat Igloo Bed Cave, Gray
\$19.99 from 2 stores
★★★★★ 272 product reviews
Frisco Dog & Cat Igloo Bed Cave, Gray; Give your pal a relaxing, secure place
Other style options: [Earthy Tone Geo Print \(\\$15\)](#) [More](#)



Cat Furniture - Frisco 52-Inch Cat Tree, Cream
\$37.99 from Chewy.com **99% positive** (347,011)
★★★★★ 3,686 product reviews
Frisco 52-in Cat Tree, Cream: The Frisco 52-inch Cat Tree is the ultimate all-in-one
Frisco - Playhouse



Frisco Dog & Cat Bed Cave, Khaki Green
\$16.99 from Chewy.com **99% positive** (347,011)
★★★★★ 510 product reviews
Frisco Dog & Cat Bed Cave, Khaki Green; There's no better spot for nesting a

b. Shopping Feeds

If you have great products, quality product images, competitive pricing, and a benefit—such as free or discounted shipping—comparison shopping engines are a smart option for you. If you find yourself interacting with a lot of price-conscious, deal-seeking customers, having a presence in Shopping Feeds can give you a leg up on the competition and convey your product benefits clearly.

c. Social Media Management & Consulting

Managing the brand personality of your company isn't as easy as it sounds. You need to find the right customer base, advertise effectively to them, and give them the kind of content and interaction they want from your company. It's also a job that requires constant monitoring and management, which can be a lot for a business owner to handle on top of everyday responsibilities, but it is well worth the investment.

d. Video SEO

Are you doing video marketing? You should be. Video is quickly becoming the go-to tool for site owners to stand out from the competition and provide their customers with high-quality shareable, searchable, sticky content.

On average:

- Users spend 88% more time on a website that contains video.
- Short videos (up to 2 minutes) get the most significant engagement.
- Video content generates 1200% more shares than images and text combined.

Video SEO helps your video get crawled and indexed in search engines, helping your site generate more traffic. We cover a few great places to start with video SEO on the next page.

Keyword-optimized file name: While it's not a make-or-break strategy, having a keyword-optimized file name will help your video index for your target market more effectively—and may even help you outperform a competitor with a similar video.

Optimized video titles & descriptions: Make sure your video title and description clearly explain the video and who it is for. For example, if it's a product review, add “product review” in the title. If it's a guide for beginners, include that in the video title.

Include a transcript: Search engines still index text content, so adding in a text transcript on your video page or including it in the description will give search engines more content and context.

Keep embedded videos to one per page: Google indexes one embedded video per page, so if you have a video you'd like them to index, make sure it's either the only video or the first video on the page.

Syndicate your video: Don't just upload to YouTube and embed a video on your site. Share it across your social media platforms, link to it on Instagram and Twitter, create a card for it on Pinterest, etc. Give your video as much visibility as you can.

PART 8

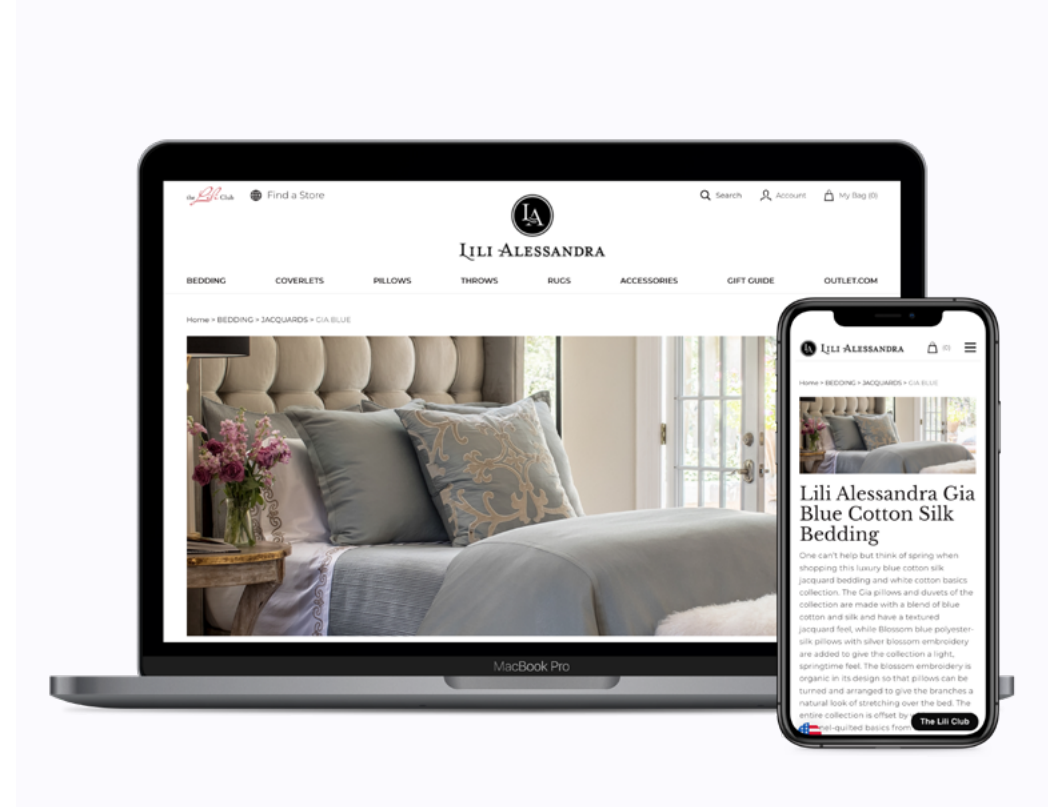
e. Design

The look and feel of your site are creating more of an impact on SEO than ever before, and it certainly plays a role in helping establish your brand and build trust with your customers. Here are a few things to keep in mind when finalizing a design for your site.

Have Clear Calls to Action

Clearly telling your customers what you want them to do is a usability best practice—and it's great for SEO. Whether your customers need to click to call, request a quote, shop your product collection, or add items to a cart, their next steps should be visually defined and easy to locate once they land on a page.

A clear call to action is important for SEO because success is measured by how well your traffic converts into sales, leads, or any other action you're measuring once it reaches your site. Although your store functions may seem intuitive to you, that may not always be the case for your customers. Your best bet is to tell them exactly what you want them to do with an effective call to action.



Make Your Text Scannable

Text that's flattened in an image can't be read by search engines, meaning the keywords and content won't be indexed. A better practice is to design your site to include an HTML textbox that responsively changes according to how large or small your content block is. To have the biggest impact, the textbox should be high on your page if possible (above the fold). It's generally a good idea to use HTML whenever possible and use JavaScript sparingly.

PART 8

Keep Displayed Products in Check

Featuring products or high-level categories on your homepage is a great way to encourage direct click-throughs to the product without the customer having to click through several menus, but the number of products you display should be kept to a reasonable number. Pages that have to display hundreds of products will slow down your page load times, which can negatively impact SEO. A good number of products to display on your homepage or category pages is 9-12.

Make Your Pictures Seen and Small

Search engines can't "see" pictures, meaning you need to give all images alt text attributes with keyword-rich phrases so they can be indexed. This also gives your images an added boost in image-based searches.

It's also best to keep images to a reasonable size. Massive images will take forever to load and slow down page speed, which can impact SEO performance and the user experience on both desktop and mobile devices.

Make Your Main Navigation Menu Action-Focused

Think about how your customers might like to shop and how quickly they can navigate to the products they are looking for. Your main navigation menu should point customers right to your revenue-producing pages, so keep it simple and clear. Links to your about us page and shipping policies can go in your footer.

Having a focused, thought-out navigation structure will make it easier for your users to get around your website, which means search engines will rank you higher. A good navigation menu is all about making your website more usable, which is not only good for your customers and your sales—search engines love it too.



Visual & Aural Content Needs Verbal Context

Similar to images, search engines can't read audio or video files. One solution is to include a descriptive and unique summary alongside this content to give search engines something to index. This allows them to understand the file's purpose and what it's about. You could also transcribe the video or audio file in full if it makes sense for your landing page.

f. Conversion Rate Optimization

Not only is CRO important for ecommerce merchants to get the most revenue from their site traffic, but it's also a growing ranking factor that impacts when search engines show your sites. At the end of the day, Google's job is to give their users the best results when they search for something, and a site that has thousands of views but no purchases doesn't stand as good of a chance as a site that people tend to buy stuff from.

We're not suggesting that this ranking factor will make or break your site, but given the option of where to rank two highly competitive sites for a search query, Google will take into account your site's UX and Conversion Rate when deciding what to show first.

Unfortunately, there is no easy way to improve conversion rate. Your site's ability to convert customers from browsers to buyers stems from several different aspects of your site: price, shipping, customer service, payment options, brand, content, design, mobile usability, social media clout, and more. It all comes down to a clear understanding of your customer needs: who they are, what they want, how they shop, what they're willing to pay, and if they're coming back.

You can start the conversion optimization process by getting feedback from your customers, friends, and family. If you're able to, shop your store yourself on desktop and mobile and try to tease out inconsistencies in design, pricing, shipping, and other pain points that might be causing your customers to go elsewhere.

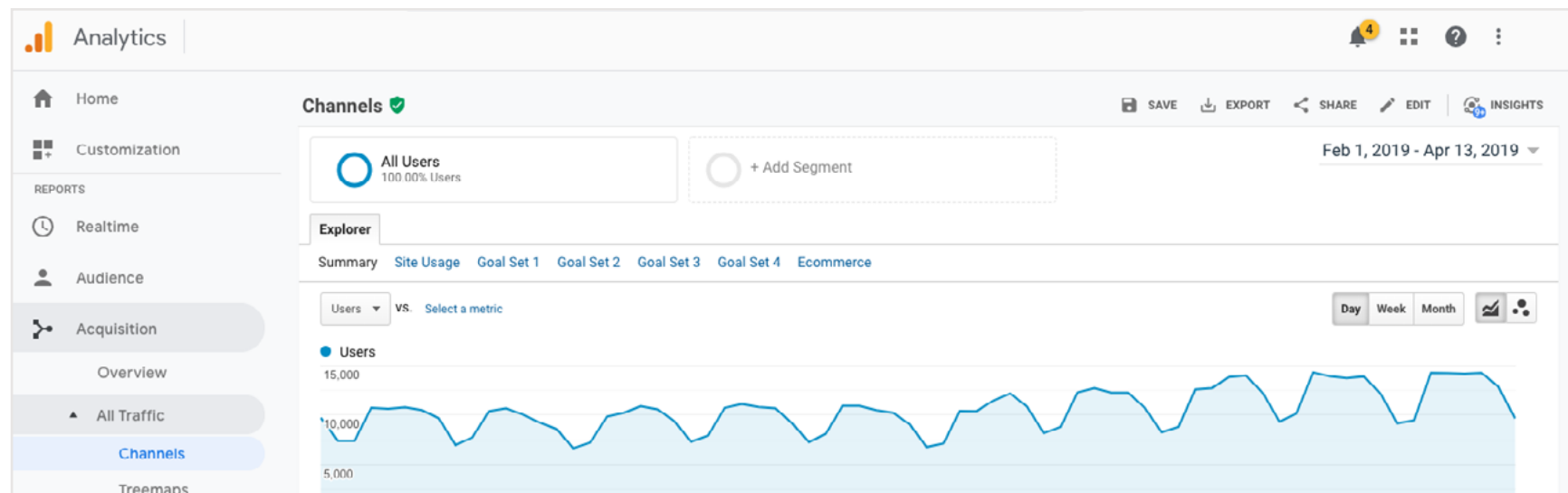
You can also look at competing websites who outrank you and model your optimizations after what they're doing right. Keep in mind that the Conversion Optimization process is iterative, meaning it's never really done. As customer needs and shopping behaviors change, your conversion strategy should too.

Data Analysis

If you don't measure how your website is performing, you won't be able to gauge the effectiveness of your marketing efforts. It's important to utilize and understand all of the data and metrics available to you so you can make educated decisions about strategies for promoting your website. However, remember that your data is like the stock market: getting caught up in the daily fluctuations may prompt rash decisions or unnecessary worry, but holding out for the long-term and

monitoring for steady growth will help you weather temporary storms while doing your due diligence.

Set up a Google Analytics account and set some custom alerts to receive notifications if anything odd happens, check in once a week to make sure there aren't any red flags, and do your heavy data-digging once a month. We'll run through what to check below.



a. High-Priority Reports

The Overview Page: This page provides a snapshot of all of the traffic on your site, defaulting to a 30-day period. Keep that default, and compare it to the previous 30 days to check on monthly movement, along with the previous year if you can. Year-over-year traffic is the ideal data set to work with for SEO, as it will show the long-term trend while mitigating data killers like outliers or seasonality. Month over month traffic doesn't tell the whole story, so you'll have to make up the gaps with external research on trends, peak business times, holidays, events, and other wild cards.

Traffic/Revenue by Channel: This will show you how your traffic (and revenue) is performing on each of your main channels: direct, paid, social, referral, and organic. It's useful in understanding how your SEO campaign is performing in relation to the other traffic mediums. Did your site's organic traffic take a drop this month? Seeing if other channels took a similar drop will give you valuable information about whether you should start looking for clues in your organic campaign, or whether something is going on with the site as a whole. A drop in direct traffic, in particular can be a portent of things to come: when direct traffic is healthy, it means you have good branding, are developing solid external marketing strategies, and provide an on-site experience that people enjoy. If your organic

traffic is dropping, but so is direct, it's likely that the organic traffic drop is the symptom of a different problem, or that it became caught in a feedback loop with direct.

Organic Traffic/Revenue: Navigating to your organic traffic specifically will provide a deeper look than the "Traffic by Channel" data. You'll get to see your percentage of new users, your conversion rate, your bounce rate, and more. You can use this screen to toggle into anything that seems unusual or interesting.

Assisted Conversions/First Interaction Analysis:

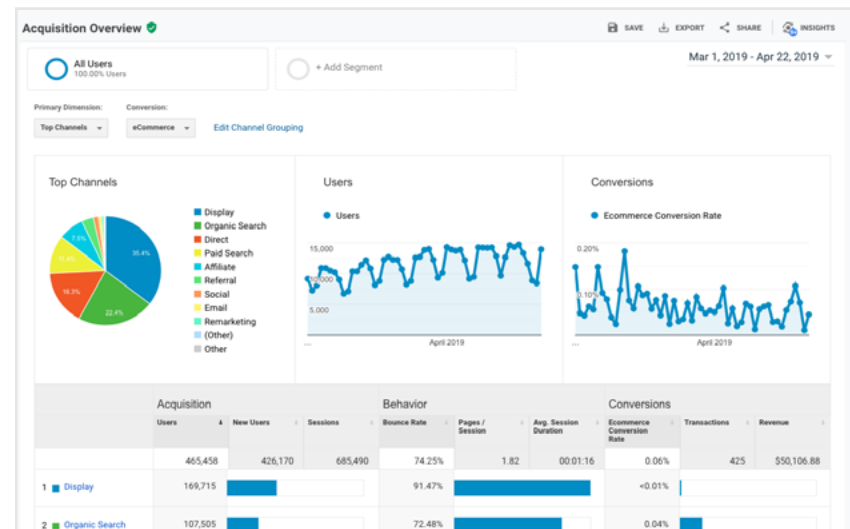
Not everyone takes a straightforward path to conversion. They might find the site via organic search, leave to think about things, and then come back directly. Alternatively, they might use a combination of paid, organic, and direct before they convert. Assisted Conversions will show you how many conversions organic traffic helped along, and First Interaction Analysis will show you how your converting traffic first found your site—no matter which path to purchase they used. It's useful to know about this because it paints a more nuanced picture of the value that each channel can provide. For businesses with a longer purchase funnel—websites selling big-ticket items that require some extra thought and research—this metric is crucial.

PART 9

Landing Pages: Which pages are pulling in the most organic traffic? Which pages convert the most? Which pages need help? Are there any surprises? This will inform the strategy of your campaign moving forward. If you're diagnosing a traffic drop, landing page data is an extremely important metric: sometimes, a drop can be traced back to just one or two pages that took a severe hit or disappeared completely (the latter would occur if you no longer sell a popular product).

Product Performance: Your ecommerce data can provide a wealth of information about how your business is doing, with the obvious indicator being product performance. Similar to the landing page data, this will help you design your strategy moving forward or address any surprises. Pay attention to items that produce the most total revenue and items that have the highest transaction value.

Conversion Rate: The best organic campaign in the world can't sell your products for you. If your conversion rate is low, that needs to be addressed—it will ultimately kill your SEO campaign if Google decides people don't find your site useful. Conversion problems could be traced to a design issue, a UX issue, a price issue, or something else entirely; check out your competitors to see if you're in step, consult a conversion expert, or just ask an objective friend to use your site, preferably within the demographic range of your target audience.



b. High-Priority Reports

Site Search Tracking: How are people using your site's search bar? If everyone is looking for the same product, you might decide to highlight it on your homepage.

Geographic Location: This is a high priority if you have a brick-and-mortar; otherwise, it's just good to know where your search traffic is coming from. Maybe there are ways to address that audience better, or maybe you need to think about expanding your reach.

Traffic by Device: With mobile search as vital as it is, make sure your mobile data looks healthy. If it doesn't, this metric bumps up to high priority.

c. Reports That Can Be Ignored

Individual Keyword Rankings: This feels counter-intuitive for a lot of people, but it's important not to fixate on keyword rankings. First of all, if you're Googling a keyword related to your store and using that to determine the keyword ranking, you're doing it wrong. The SERP you're looking at is tailored to your location and search history, so it's not a useful indicator of the whole. You'll have to go to Google Analytics or Search Console for (very) incomplete

keyword data, or you can pay for a rank tracking tool—but it still won't give you the sense of direction you're looking for. This can be confusing because keywords are still a cornerstone of SEO. However, when we focus on 3-5 keywords per page to optimize, what we're really focusing on is the hundreds of offshoots of those keywords. Semantic search—the phenomenon wherein people search for whatever phrase pops into their brain first, which is unlikely to be the same as somebody else's brain-phrase—turns each keyword into a little semantic family. That's something you can't just track by checking in on the single keyword, even if it's the “parent.”

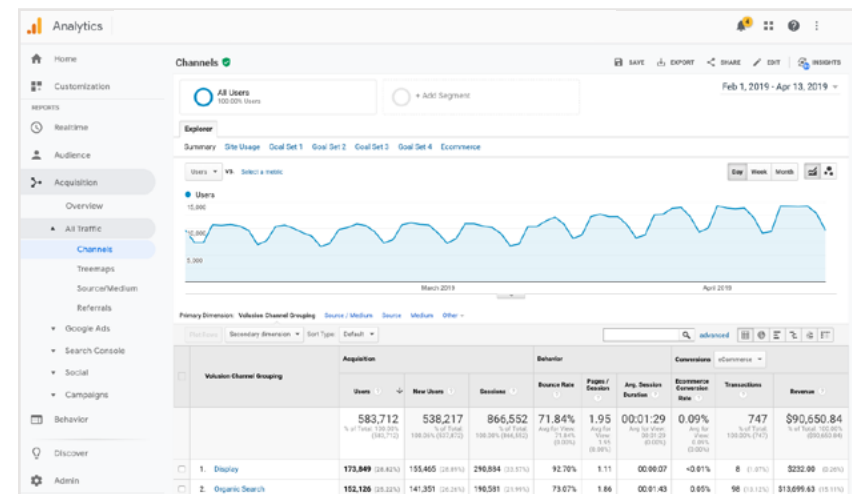
Any Metric You See on Free SEO Audits: These tools scrape your site sans human involvement, and while they do provide some useful information (duplicate tags, for example), it's important to approach them with skepticism. Some audits focus on low-priority items and use confusing phrases like “low text-to-HTML ratio,” which just means “there wasn't a lot of content on this page.” SEO audits are great, but the free ones can only provide the information that is available to their scrapers, which means they're missing the forest and pointing out trees. Use them for the basics, but don't expect all of them to be a reliable indicator of your campaign's health.

d. SEO Analytics Tools

Google Analytics: The wealth of data available in Google Analytics can seem overwhelming, but once you break it down, you will find several pieces of information that can help you clearly understand your website's organic health and daily traffic.

Google Search Console: A companion tool to Google Analytics, Google Search Console looks more closely at how your site performs from a technical standpoint. If you have any 404 errors on your site or need to take a closer look at websites that are linking to you, GSC can help you process that information easily. It's also a good way to see if there are any areas of your site that need to be revised for duplicate meta tag issues, or if your site has received manual ranking penalties from Google that need to be addressed. GSC also allows you to submit your website's sitemap, identify keywords currently driving organic traffic to your site, review crawl errors, and more. We recommend regularly observing the data provided by Search Console to ensure the overall health of your website.

Additional tools: Part 7's Link Building & Networking discussion touched on various third-party tools you can use to learn more about your website's linking profile. [Ahrefs](#), [Moz](#), [SEMrush](#), and [Majestic](#) are all great tools for seeing your website's performance from a variety of angles.



CONCLUSION

Build your SEO Strategy

Just as a house always has something to fix, SEO is multi-faceted and always changing. Keeping your on-page content unique and fresh will tell to search engines that you have the best content for your products and industry.

Building an off-page blogging strategy shares your expertise with your customer base, while a strong social media presence is crucial to building your brand's voice and personality so you can connect with your customers on a more personal level. Supplementary work, such as paid search advertising and website design, helps feature your company in more places on search engine results pages, builds trust that the site functions as it should, and creates a pleasant user experience.

Thankfully, as with any skill—the more you work on your site's SEO, the better you get at determining the best strategy for your site. Choosing an [ecommerce platform](#) with built-in on-page SEO capabilities makes the job simpler, and referencing back to this guide will help you with the rest.

Studio

Special thanks to Meg Nanson of [Studio](#) for contributing to this guide. So many moving SEO parts require time and patience, which can be daunting for one person. Using a digital marketing agency like Studio ensures that your website is in good hands, letting you focus on the everyday management of your business. [Learn more](#) about Studio's SEO services.