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Increase Your Organic Traffic to Boost Ecommerce Sales

2021

Why A Great SEO Strategy Is Vital for Ecommerce

Ecommerce businesses wanting to get found online must incorporate thoughtful strategies into their marketing plans. When done well, this process should involve paying close attention to any Search Engine Optimization (SEO) tactics already being employed, as well as considering how these tactics can be adjusted to improve rankings on Search Engine Results Pages (SERPs).

Ensuring that search engines react favorably to online stores is critical. With an estimated 12 to 24 million online shops in operation today,[1] ecommerce businesses already face an enormous amount of competition to attract online buyers. And with an estimated 3.5 billion daily searches on Google alone,[2] aiming for higher rankings in SERPs is a wise move. Aside from giving themselves a leg up on the competition, here are a few additional reasons why ecommerce merchants should invest in their SEO.

Customers Overwhelmingly Use Search for Purchase

According to global market research firm Forrester, 71% of U.S. consumers use search engines to discover new businesses to purchase from.[3] This is in addition to the 74% who stated they use search engines specifically in the consideration/purchase stage of their customer journey. With such a high percentage of shoppers trusting search engines like Google to guide them to what they're looking for, search strategies cannot be overlooked.

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Organic Search Still Outpaces Paid Search

Many businesses use paid ads, social accounts, and other means to ensure that they are visible higher up on SERPs. While these methods can help get a business seen, Brightedge reports that search traffic makes an impressive 41% of visits in the retail and ecommerce industry[4]—for comparison, paid traffic makes up only 23.6%. This shows that consumers trust pages that appear organically to fulfill their needs more than paid advertisements.

Customers Overwhelmingly Use Search for Purchase

Considering the competitive landscape of SERPs, businesses may consider ranking on the second or third page of search sufficient. However, a Moz study reveals that about 71.33% of searches result in a page one organic click, while page two and three get only 5.59% of clicks.[5] A separate study by Backlinko supports this trend, revealing that only 0.78% of Google search users clicked on a result from the second page.[6] While a ranking on page 2 or 3 is much better than page 100, it still does little to bring businesses to the front of the pack.

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Search Produces Better Quality Leads

Investing in search doesn't just help the quantity of leads coming to your business. A HubSpot study found that 60% of marketers consider inbound practices (SEO, blog content, etc.) as their highest quality source of leads.[7] There are likely many reasons for this: for one, customers searching for products themselves are likely to already be further along in the buyer journey. Additionally, good SEO places content and information about a business in many places, hitting customers at multiple stages of the buyer journey. This means that by the time a customer is ready to purchase, they have already heard of and trust your business.

Search Is Important For Post-Purchase, Too

Search isn't only important for getting businesses noticed online when a customer is considering a purchase—Forrester's study reports that 93% of customers use search to keep in touch with brands post-purchase.[8] Indeed, getting found after the purchase stage helps both maintain customer loyalty and create brand advocates out of customers. The study also found that searches on search engines (51%) trail only the brands' website (64%) among individual channels that customers turn to in the relationship stage, solidifying this concept.

How to Improve SEO for Your Online Store

Once the importance of investing in SEO to succeed online has been recognized, businesses have many options on where to start beginning or updating their SEO strategy. You can check out this article from Volusion's blog for some of the [top strategies for improving your SEO](#). In the meantime, there are a few larger-picture items online store owners can work on to start moving their business in the right direction.

Maintain a Mobile-Friendly Site

Shoppers continue to forgo the familiar dexterity of desktop shopping for the convenience of shopping on their smartphones. Google itself has reported that 51% of smartphone users have discovered a new company or product when conducting a search on their smartphones.[9] When it comes to ranking, SEOClarity found that ranking in position #1 on mobile helps sites get 27.7% of clicks, whereas ranking in position #1 on desktop nets sites 19.3% of clicks.[10] Back in 2015, Google even identified mobile-friendliness as a direct ranking factor in search.[11]

51%
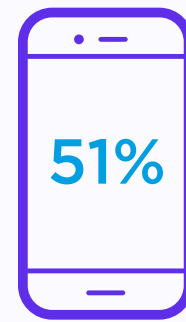
of smartphone users have discovered a new company or product when conducting research on their smartphone

While there is some debate about whether Google still uses mobile-friendliness as a direct ranking factor today, good mobile sites still have an indirect effect on Google rankings by reducing bounce rates on mobile devices. For ecommerce stores, this means that maintaining a mobile version of your site should be top priority, whether by using a mobile-first interface or a template that uses responsive design.

Boost Your Site's Performance

Ensuring consistently great site performance is another way to jumpstart your SEO efforts. Like mobile-friendliness, speed has also been identified by Google as a ranking factor,[12] partially because of its effect on bounce rates. Google researchers found that the probability of a bounce increases by 32% when page load speed increases from one second to three

seconds, and it jumps to 90% when load speed increases to five seconds.[13] Additionally, a separate study by SEMRush identified a correlation between bounce rate and Google rankings as well as a significant correlation between direct traffic and Google rankings.[14]

There are many steps businesses can take to increase site speed. Compressing all marketing and product images on a site can ease the "weight" on each page, causing load times to speed up. Server-side rendering ensures that site visitors see fully-rendered pages quickly even if their connection isn't great. Having an SSL inherently makes sites run faster while adding a level of security. Together, relatively small changes like these can make a large impact for ecommerce stores.

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Incorporate Technical SEO Practices

Another great place to begin revamped SEO efforts is to ensure that good technical SEO practices are in place on your site. To be more specific, businesses must make sure their sites meet the technical requirements of modern search engines. Our suggestions above for speeding up websites are great examples of technical SEO. A few others include:

- ✅ **Avoid redirect chains.** Each time a page is deleted or depreciated, its URL should be redirected to a new URL. However, it's important to keep track of all these instances this has been done so that one URL isn't being sent across a high number of redirected URLs to reach its final destination. Google's John Mueller suggests that you aim for 5 or fewer hops (redirects) for URLs that are frequently crawled.[15]

- ✅ **Optimize title tags.** Make sure that the title tags used for each page are accurate and contain relevant information about what the user and search engine will see on the page. Keywords work well in title tags when used sparingly; further, title tags that start with a keyword typically outperform title tags with the keyword towards the end of the tag.[16]

✓ **Spruce up meta descriptions.** While Google doesn't use the meta description as a direct ranking signal,[17] it can still have an impact on your click-through rates. Meta descriptions that draw users' attention with information they might find useful usually see higher click rates than those that are left blank or that poorly convey the subject matter of the page.

Final Thoughts

When it comes to running a successful ecommerce business, SEO is one of the most important factors to pay attention to. In the digital age, a great business venture cannot maximize sales if it cannot be easily found and identified online. Thankfully, a combination of SEO strategies and technical SEO implementation can bring both revenue and growth for online businesses that invest in it.

Resources

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About Volusion

Volusion is an all-in-one ecommerce solution that helps entrepreneurs build and manage successful online businesses. Since 1999, our dedicated team of developers, marketers, designers, and technical support experts have been passionate about helping merchants operate and grow their stores, whether startup or established. Two decades later, Volusion has earned dozens of accolades and powered over 150,000 successful online businesses.

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