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# LEARNING SEO FROM THE EXPERTS

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“*Solve for the humans!*”



Search engines have become a core resource for individuals looking for a business, product, or service. Over the years, online search has reduced the need for traditional means of searching, such as Yellow Pages.

Your business needs to adapt to the changes of the new consumer searching landscape.

Businesses no longer need to spend thousands of dollars on advertising in directories and magazines. Every business with a website has the potential to get found by more customers online through search engine optimization (SEO) and inbound marketing.

Whether you have already invested in an SEO strategy or are just getting started, this ebook will help you gain a stronger understanding of all aspects in the SEO process. The ideas, best practices, and examples all come from top SEO experts.

CHAPTER 1

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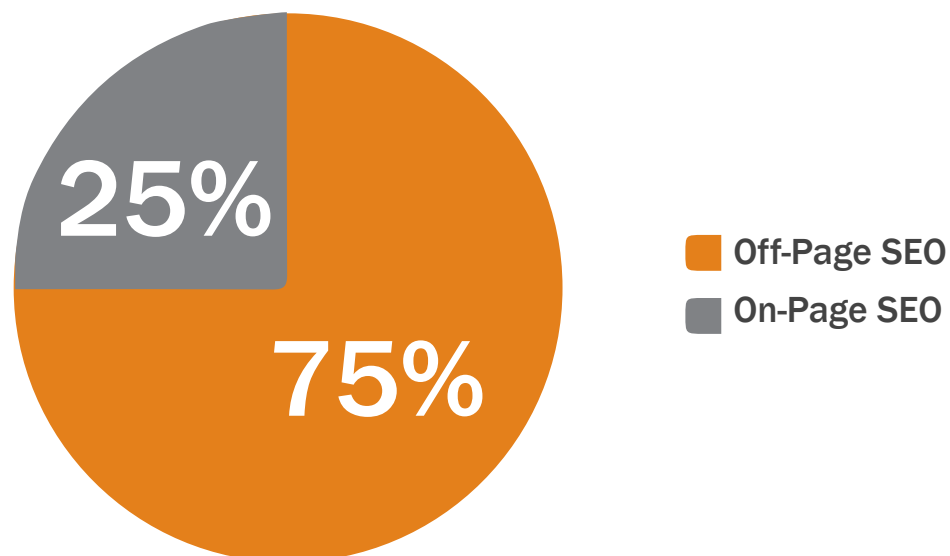
**KEYWORDS:**  
**UNDERSTANDING**  
**FUNDAMENTALS**

# SEO Basics: Understanding Keywords

Once upon a time, marketers focused on strategizing which keywords to place across their web presence in order to increase their rankings in a search engine results page (SERP).

But the world of search engine optimization has been changing drastically -- particularly with the constant changes Google has been making to its search algorithm. And all that emphasis you put on keyword research and selection, in other words on-page SEO, is only worth 25% of what actually impacts your spot in SERP.

The only problem is, you can't truly master the other 75% -- off-page SEO discussed later in this guide -- until you understand and master the basics.



# Why Do Keywords Matter?

Keywords or key phrases are simply the search terms someone types into a search engine, such as Google or Bing, when they are looking for certain information. People are constantly using keywords: whether they are in search for a specific product or just browsing to conduct personal research.

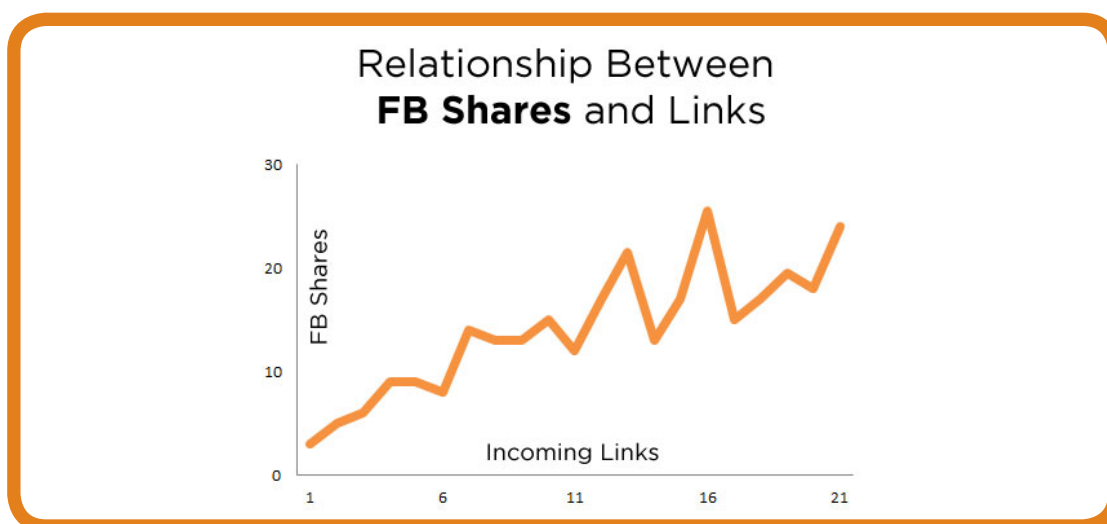


95% of the U.S. Internet browsing population accesses search engines each month. Furthermore, the U.S. online population makes an average of 37 search engine visits per person per month.

That's a whole lot of time spent searching various keyword and key phrase combinations!

## Determine Your Keywords

Keywords are at the heart of SEO, and selecting the right ones can make or break your SEO strategy. Compile a list of about ten keywords associated with your product or services. Plug these keywords into Google's Keyword Planner, and find variations that make sense for your business.

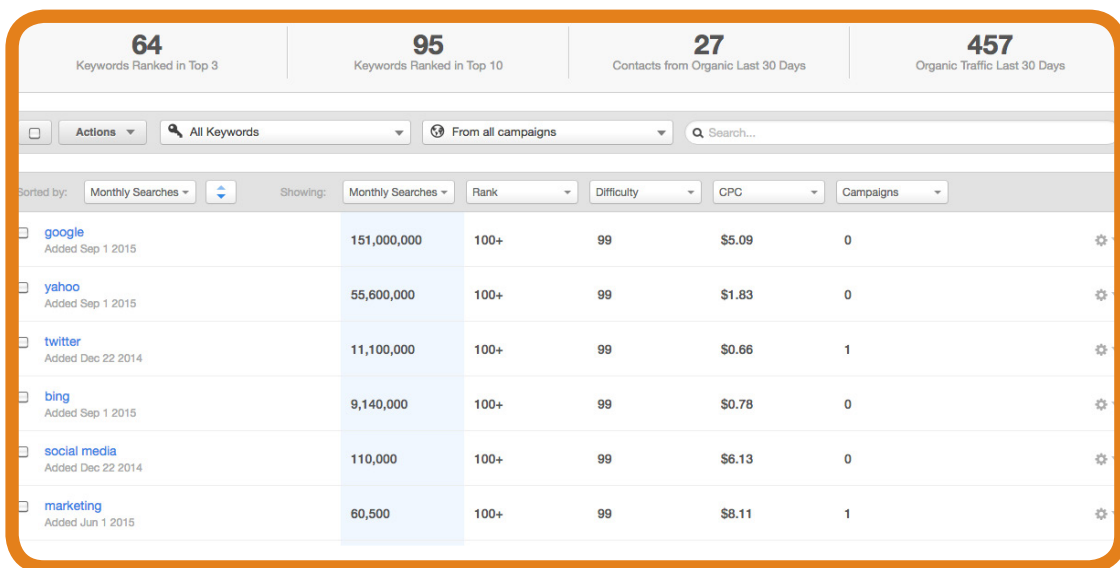


Use search volume and competition as a good measure for determining what you can easily attack. But never settle on a list of 10-15 keywords, as the old ways taught. Start with a small list, but continuously adapt and analyze your choices as your business grows and adapts.

# Track Your Keyword Success

Now that you know what keywords to implement in your marketing strategy, be sure to follow their progress and ensure they're returning the value you want from them.

Let's use HubSpot's keyword tool to demonstrate how this process might look like. The software continuously analyzes your keyword performance to show you what keywords you're ranking for, what the cost-per-click (CPC) for those keywords are -- so you know how much you're saving -- and how many visits you're sending to your website thanks to these keywords and/or key phrases.



The screenshot displays the HubSpot keyword tool interface. At the top, there are four summary cards: '64 Keywords Ranked in Top 3', '95 Keywords Ranked in Top 10', '27 Contacts from Organic Last 30 Days', and '457 Organic Traffic Last 30 Days'. Below these is a search bar with 'All Keywords' selected and a filter set to 'From all campaigns'. The main table is sorted by 'Monthly Searches' and shows the following data:

Keyword	Monthly Searches	Rank	Difficulty	CPC	Campaigns
google <small>Added Sep 1 2015</small>	151,000,000	100+	99	\$5.09	0
yahoo <small>Added Sep 1 2015</small>	55,600,000	100+	99	\$1.83	0
twitter <small>Added Dec 22 2014</small>	11,100,000	100+	99	\$0.66	1
bing <small>Added Sep 1 2015</small>	9,140,000	100+	99	\$0.78	0
social media <small>Added Dec 22 2014</small>	110,000	100+	99	\$6.13	0
marketing <small>Added Jun 1 2015</small>	60,500	100+	99	\$8.11	1



CHAPTER 2

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# MASTERING ON-PAGE SEO

# What is On-Page SEO?

In the history of search engine optimization, the rank of a piece of content in any search engine results has typically come down to two key drivers: relevancy and authority built through content on your website. When optimizing your content, focus on specific keywords that match what people are searching for online.

The first rule of on-page SEO is to think about what your target users might be searching for and make sure those keywords are on the page. This increases the likelihood of reaching those users as they go to Google, Bing or other search engines.

That being said, on-page SEO is basically about two things:

- 1 Picking the best keywords around which to base each of your pages
- 2 Making it clear to search engines that your page revolves around those keywords

# On-Page Optimization: The Old Way

Search engine algorithms rank web pages based on numerous factors.


The basic premise is that a page will show up in search engine results because the website has a page that mentions the searched for terms. Of course, many websites use the same keywords on the same page.

Hundreds of tools are littered across the web that allow you to measure the keyword density of a page. Some of them teach that more is better. As a result, webmasters would crank out keyword-stuffed text that was not interesting and/or provided a horrible user experience.

These keywords would be stuffed in various places, including:

 The URL

 The on-page headings

 The page title

 Aggressively throughout

 The meta description tag

the page content

Such tactics even ended up stripping out important keyword variations -- so the page wouldn't rank as well, or at all, for the related keywords.

# On-Page Optimization: The New Way

Marketers should still be using keywords.

But rather than littering them throughout every aspect of your page, think about the value you want each page to provide, and which keywords match that value. And rather than repeating the same word over and over again, you should use a diverse set of related keywords to help you rank for a variety of long tail keywords.

For example:

Link vs links

Build vs building

Strategy vs strategies

Also rank for a verity of lateral keywords.

For example:

Lawyer vs attorney

Dentist vs oral surgeon

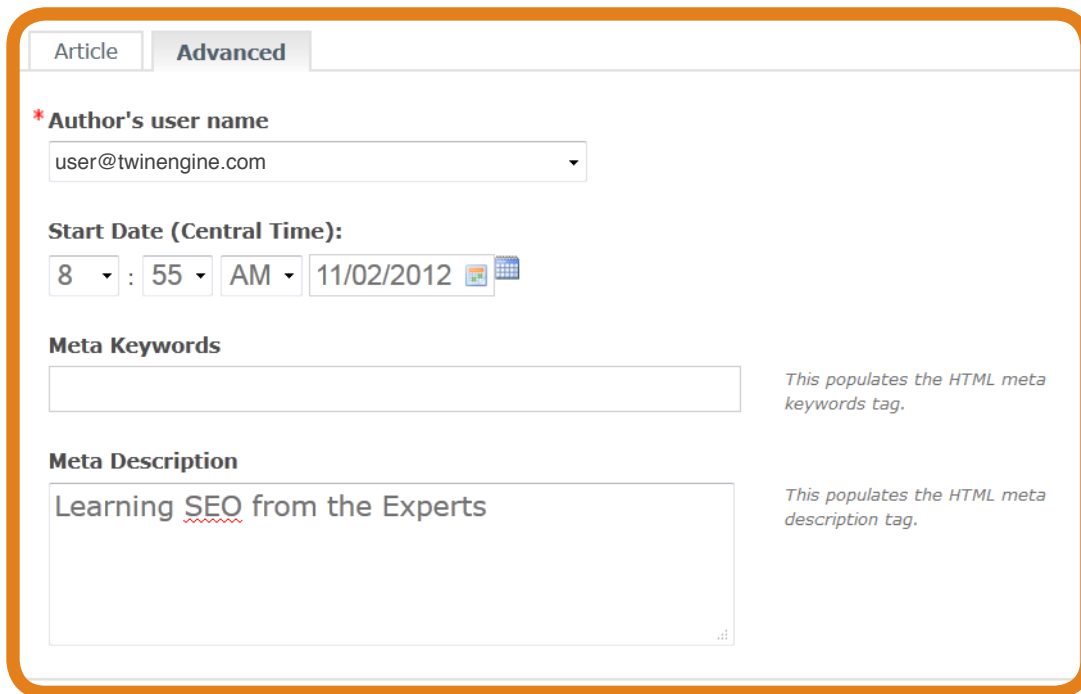
SEO vs inbound marketing



# The Core Components of On-Page SEO

## Meta Tags

Meta tags are the official data tags for each web page that are found inbetween the open and closing head tags in the HTML code. The most popular Meta tags are the title tag, meta description, and keyword tag. These tags alert search engines with relevant information describing the content of the page, which helps the search engines decide if your website is an appropriate listing in response to a particular search query.



The screenshot shows a form with two tabs: 'Article' and 'Advanced'. The 'Advanced' tab is selected. The form contains the following fields:

- \* Author's user name:** A dropdown menu with the value 'user@twinengine.com'.
- Start Date (Central Time):** A date and time picker showing '8 : 55 AM 11/02/2012' with a calendar icon.
- Meta Keywords:** An empty text input field. To its right is the text: *This populates the HTML meta keywords tag.*
- Meta Description:** A text input field containing the text 'Learning SEO from the Experts'. To its right is the text: *This populates the HTML meta description tag.*



## Title Tags & Meta Descriptions

Title tags and Meta descriptions are two of the most important tags when it comes to SEO and enticing potential visitors to click through to your website.

A title tag is an HTML tag which contains a sentence of text describing the contents of its associated webpage. These tags are the first aspect of your page that a search engine crawler – (crawlers are what search engines use to analyze the content of a site in response to a search to then present the best results) comes across when visiting your website, so it's important to make a good first impression by optimizing them with your keywords and brand. Titles generally run about 77 characters, so make sure to enter each character wisely.

Meta descriptions are what appear on SERP describing the content of the page being linked to. While these descriptions are not used by the search engines to determine relevance, they are used by your visitors to determine said relevancy and entice them to click – think about when you search! You almost always read the description of each link before deciding to click, right? Or at least skim. Make sure you include your keywords and the main call-to-action right in this description.

**TIP:** Meta descriptions generally run about 160 characters. Don't only use those characters well, but stick to that limit so that when the description appears in Google it's not cut off with ellipses!



## Content

On-page content is a critical component of on-page SEO. Content is what the search engine crawlers need to associate your page with a set of keywords and/or key phrases. Without it, crawlers are left in the dark as to what your page is about.

When building your content, it's important to remember to give the crawlers enough to bite into.

A hundred words typically isn't enough copy for these crawlers to read and understand what the content is about. And this content shouldn't be stuffed with keywords either, as some search engines (as you'll learn in later sections) punish websites for keyword stuffing.

Instead, you should write about your product or service or idea naturally, and let your keyword variations naturally fall into place. If that doesn't happen, go back and spring in some variations into the content so that the same message gets across, just optimize!



# Localization

Where appropriate, you should add localization. This is extremely important to businesses who offer products and services to a specific geographic region. If you are an attorney, you'll want to have a page of content set up for each location you service. When building your content, you'll want to include localized keywords so that the search engines know you have offices and operate in certain locations.

## Quick Action Items for Local Businesses

If you are a local business, be sure to optimize your location easily and quickly with the following tools:

 [Google Places](#)

 [Bing Local](#)

 [Yahoo Local Listings](#)



CHAPTER 3

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# UNDERSTANDING OFF-PAGE SEO

# What is Off-Page SEO?

Off-page SEO is all about building online authority – trust and reputation – for your website.

Off-page SEO has long been defined by the quantity, quality, and relevance of links to your website that establish your SEO authority and ultimately influence your search results ranking.

Authority historically was established as other websites linked to you; building your link portfolio. The problem, however, was that authority was almost entirely defined by just links.

Essentially, off-page SEO used to be a fancy word for “getting more links,” but now it should focus on earning links through multiple channels instead. Understandably, it will require a paradigm shift to stop thinking about off-page as just link “building” and instead as link “earning.”

Your site’s authority is only partly based on analysis of the sites that link to you. Off-page SEO is more than just link building (link building itself will be discussed more in the next chapter). The way you diversify authority for your website is through the conversations people are having about your brand and the references they make to it. A diversified link portfolio should look something like what I detail throughout this chapter.



## Link Building


Link building is essentially the practice of building inbound links to help give your website authority. The modern efforts of “earning” links are discussed more in the next chapter.



## Compelling Content

Yes, optimizing for off-page SEO is still about content marketing. After all, without content it’s hard to earn those links. The best way to earn relevant links from other sites to yours is to create unique, relevant content that can quickly gain popularity online, particularly with your target audience. The more useful, relevant and compelling your content is, the greater the chances someone else will find that content valuable and link to it.

Your content must align with your target audience – that persona that surmises your ideal customer. Content must also be authentic and unique, and ultimately solve a problem or answer a question. That content then also should be easily sharable which combined with solid on-page SEO best practices makes for awesome “link bait.”



Link Bait: Any content that is created for the purpose of attracting multiple readers & prompting those readers to reshare or link to that content.

## Co-Marketing

Co-marketing defines the efforts of lots of cross promoting, networking and community building. It's a partnership between two or more companies in which both companies jointly market each other's content, products or services.

The great thing about co-marketing is, like the idea with guest posting, that you have access to another company's social networks, prospects, leads and/or customers, which ultimately increases your reach. And what better than to have one or more companies brag about the content that you are creating, especially since it benefits them too? It's brilliant.





## Social Media

Social media hasn't always been on the radar as part of off-page SEO. When it first came to surface it was often being used inappropriately (still is by some today). Users or businesses thought to basically spam social networks and followers instead of putting real thought and work behind it. To them social media was just one more way to get links. Social media in some way is the new forums or blog commenting with an opportunity to have real conversations.



## PR

When you think of PR you may think of it as just an announcement that blasts multiple new sources. However, well planned and optimized PR can be awesome for your SEO efforts. PR should promote genuine and ethical dialogue driven content to improve a brand's organic search engine results. Effective PR outreach should include more than the traditional publication channels. Your strategy should include outreach to bloggers, industry influencers, and social media leaders.

CHAPTER 4

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# THE RIGHT WAY TO BUILD LINKS

# Why Search Engines Care About Links

Search engine algorithms rank web pages based on numerous factors.

The basic premise is that a page will show up in search engine results because the website had mentioned the terms that were being searched for on the website page. Of course, many websites use the same keywords on the same page. But in order for search engines to determine how these pages should be ranked, they take into consideration two major factors:

- 1 The **quantity** of links that point to that page and site.
- 2 The **quality** of links that point to that page and site.

The more trustworthy your page appears to be, the higher your page will rank in search engine results.

# The Value of A Link

The value of a link serves two major benefits:

- 1 Links increase the authority and trustworthiness of a page to search engines, which increases the overall authority of that website.
- 2 Links help search engines connect the relevancy of a page with specific keywords -- based on the keywords that are used in a link's anchor text.

Anchor text is the clickable text on a hyperlink. For example, let's say a page was linked to in one of the following ways:

[Bob's Hardware Store](#)

*versus*

[Buy power tools at Bob's Hardware Store](#)

The second link with the targeted keyword "power tools" will likely rank higher in the search engines.

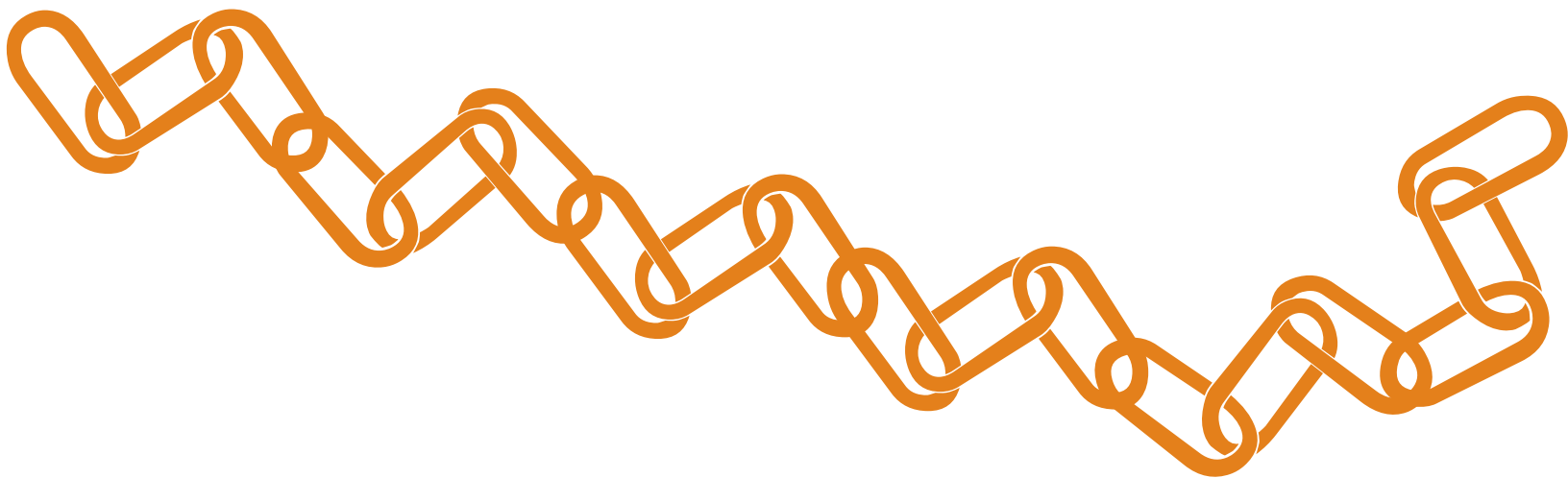


# The Wrong Way to Build Links

The initial purpose of search engines counting the quantity and quality of links, linking back to any webpage, was to ensure that only those pages providing valuable and trustworthy content to their users would be ranked highly in the search engine results.

Unfortunately, this provided opportunities to game the system and find easier, quicker solutions to build massive quantities of links back to webpages in order to rank highly for different search results.

To better understand the true power of link building, let's review the sneaky and quick link-building tactics some sites employed, and how search engines developed algorithmic changes to combat it.





# Directories

## The Problem with Directories

A good directory's intent is to sort the internet into different categories/ subcategories, while providing links to good websites in those categories. Although there are legitimate directory websites, many were built solely for the purpose of building links back to webpages without consideration of link quality. This is the wrong way to build links.

## How the Search Engines Fixed It

Several studies have shown that in the past year, search engines (especially Google) have started removing free directories from their index. This means that the links gained from those directories are no longer counted towards a website's overall link quality/quantity count! This also implies that relying on directories to build links to a website is a short-term strategy – especially since Google has started taking action on both directories and the websites that have relied on this tactic to rank highly in the search engine results.



# Paid Links

## The Problem with Paid Links

Paid links are links garnered in exchange for payment. They may include a larger network of link buyers and sellers usually involving a link network or a group of low-quality sites that link to a specific webpage to increase the authority of a website. Other times, there may be a reciprocal linking program, where a group of websites link to one another.

Paid links are like paying someone to be your wingman to impress a girl rather than having a genuine friend by your side who can vouch for how great you really are!

## How the Search Engines Fixed It

All the afore mentioned methodologies go against search engine guidelines, specifically Google's Webmaster Guidelines, and can result in severe consequences. Search engines are able to spot these types of link building activities by detecting website registration connections or finding websites that follow specific linking patterns.



# Article Marketing

## The Problem with Article Marketing

Article marketing involves writing one unique article, and then rearranging the words to transform that one article into multiple versions. This rearranged article will then be placed on different, usually low-quality article sites with highly optimized anchor text links.

This tactic helped a website from being penalized by search engines for duplicate content (the exact same content across lots of different sites), and boosted both page strength and relevance.

## How the Search Engines Fixed It

The search engines now identify low quality content through user engagement, and by correlating website features. Networks of sites where you can place this kind of content are even easier for them to identify. As a marketer, the primary warning sign should be sites where you can post your content with no editorial oversight from the website owner.

## Consequences of Low-Quality Link Building Tactics

There are signs that low-quality link building tactics, such as the three just mentioned, will remain a short-term strategy. It's clear that search engines don't like ranking websites that take actions purely for the purpose of ranking and not for benefit of the user's experience.

Over time, search engine algorithms have also become increasingly complex to fight what search engines view as spammy tactics that try to game their system.

“*SEO is not about optimizing for search engines, it's about optimizing for humans.*”

# Google's Search Algorithm

There have been advances to search engine algorithms that specifically target websites involved in these low-quality link building strategies. Google has launched two major algorithmic changes.

## 1 Panda 4.2

Panda was designed to target low-quality sites, such as article marketing sites. At its release, the algorithm significantly affected approximately 12% of all search results and shifted the viability of low-quality content sites who had depended on these link building tactics as their business model. Today, the latest update affects 2-3% of all search queries.

## 2 Penguin 4.0

Penguin is a filter designed to capture sites that are spamming Google's search results in ways that regular spamming systems may not detect. Over-optimized or spammy websites, such as those that had too much keyword-based anchor text – especially from low-quality sites – are penalized until the next time the filter runs again. It also further targeted sites involved in link building schemes, such as the ones previously mentioned.

Both Penguin and Panda are periodically refreshed. These major algorithmic changes force sites to focus on organic methods for garnering links.

# The Right Way to Build Links

Modern link building focuses on high-quality, original content that provides value to users and incorporates an involved audience.


Although this type of link building isn't easy nor quick, it is the best safeguard against future search engine algorithms, as authoritative, well-managed websites are the type of sites that search engines want to see rank highly in their results.

High-quality, unique content on a website that builds links can come in many forms, such as:



## Company Blogs

Write appealing content that other people will WANT to link to.



## Visual Content

Powerful, unique, or even comical, images lead people to link to your website. This includes video content as well!



## Product Launches

Building anticipation around a product launch inspires people to talk about your business, which can lead to links to your site.



## Guest Blogging

Creating valuable content for other websites provides an easy way to get links back to your business – be sure to provide the guest site with beneficial content, and don't bury the entire post in links.

Link building can also come from building a targeted and involved community. The more regular visitors a site has, and the more passionate those fans are, the more likely webpages will be read, shared, and linked to. A perfect example is My Starbucks's Idea, where users can pitch ideas about the next Starbucks's offering.





CHAPTER 5

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# HOW TO INCREASE CLICKS IN SERP

# The Search Ranking Myth

Historically, traffic from search engines has been about a very singular pursuit – that of rankings.

While you want to land on the first page, there's much more to optimizing for SERP placement.

Higher rankings lead to more clicks and visits from interested searchers, and that search traffic is uniquely valuable because of its high relevancy and timeliness – people search when they're interested or ready to perform an action.

However, in the last few years, the relentless focus on rankings alone has ignored the reality of change in the world of search results, and the value of clickthrough rate (CTR).



# The Value of Ranking CTR

Today, queries don't just return a list of ten blue, ordered links. They return results with images, videos, profile pictures, and all manner of meta data that help searchers choose the best result.

Ranking #1 years ago brought ~40% of the traffic to a particular query results page. Today, that figure is less than 20%. Meanwhile, rankings in lower positions have gained some of those clicks. Here's a few reasons why:

## [Lead the Way With Social Media - TwinEngine](#)

[blog.twinengine.com/blog/bid/.../Lead-the-Way-With-Social-Media](#) ▾

B2B and B2C businesses use Facebook accounts to acquire new customers; companies that use a Twitter account generate double the amount of **leads** per m.



## [Lead the Way With Budgets: Social Media Marketing - TwinEngine](#)

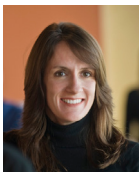
[blog.twinengine.com/.../Lead-the-Way-With-Budgets-Social-Media-Mar...](#) ▾

Increases in inbound marketing tactics include bigger budgets for **social media**, virtual events, and search **engine** marketing.

## [Putting Twitter to Work - TwinEngine, Powered by The H Agency](#)

[blog.twinengine.com/blog/bid/275049/Putting-Twitter-to-Work](#) ▾

**Twitter's** social platform has a more casual tone and requires some different techniques than Facebook to attract followers. To gain exposure and awa.



## [twin-engine-social-media-trends-infographic-2013 - Empower Network](#)

[www.empowernetwork.com/.../social-media.../twin-engine-social-media-...](#) ▾

Jun 12, 2013 ← Social Media Marketing Exposed! The 13 Trends of 2013. **twin-engine-social-media-trends-infographic-2013**. By Eric Preuss | Published June ...

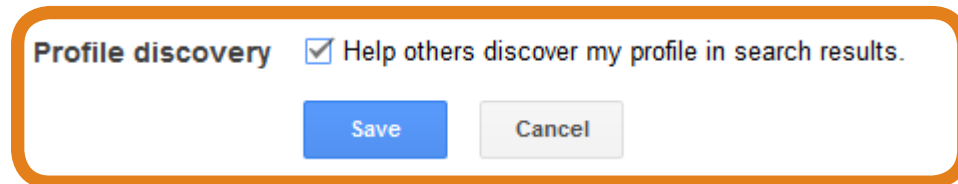


# Improve Rank CTR with Author Images

In order to see an author image appear in Google search, you need to have “authorship.” Here’s how to do it:

- 1 Make sure your Google+ profile page has a profile photo that is a recognizable headshot.
- 2 Make sure you have an email address (for example, jdoe@twinengine.com) on the same domain as your content (twinengine.com). If you don’t have an email address on the same domain, Google has an alternative method for linking your content to your Google+ profile.
- 3 In the “About” section of your Google+ profile, add that email address so it’s easier for Google to associate your Google+ account with your domain.
- 4 In addition, make sure each article you publish on that domain has a clear byline identifying you as the author (for example, “By John Doe” or “Author: John Doe”).

- 5 Furthermore, make sure that byline name matches the name on your Google+ profile.
- 6 Visit Google's Authorship page, and submit your email address to Google. Regardless of the number of articles you publish on this domain, you'll only need to go through this process once.
- 7 In the "About" section of your Google+ profile, make sure the profile discovery box, "Help others discover my profile in search," is checked.



Once Google approves your authorship request, your Google+ profile will update with the domain on which you're a content contributor in the "Contributor to" section of your Google+ profile. By default, it will also automatically make your email address visible to the public. If you want to keep your email address private on your page, you have the option to change its visibility. You may also receive an email confirmation from Google once your request for Authorship has been approved.

# The Holistic View of Search Rankings

When optimizing for search traffic today, marketers can't think just about rankings, they need to be holistic in their approach to the visibility and appearance of listings.

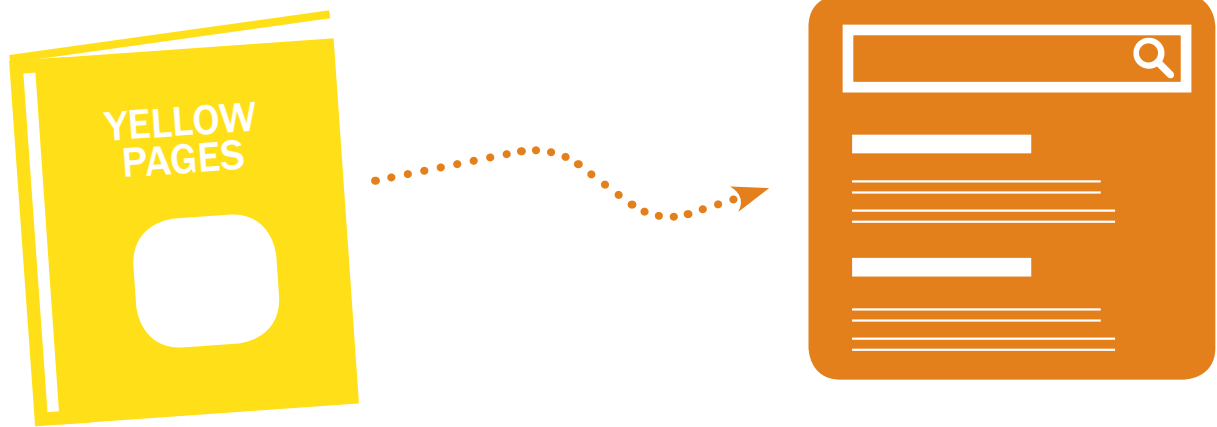
Google+ author profiles, as explained, can make headshots appear alongside descriptions. Video XML Sitemaps can be used to show a video capture image. Rich snippets protocols can be applied

to e-commerce listings for pricing, availability, quantity and other consumer-friendly details. And these are only the tip of the iceberg.

A marketer who dives deep on this topic can find dozens of opportunities to enhance their listing and earn more traffic. Because these days, it's not enough to rank. Marketers need to earn their clicks.



# CONCLUSION



The world of search began a long time ago. Where we once upon a time used Yellow Pages as our search tool of choice, we've now transitioned to search engines.

And after reading through each chapter in this guide, you should have a start-to-finish understanding of every aspect of search engine optimization. One thing to keep in mind, though, is that all this won't come together with a snap of a finger!

Tackle one chapter at a time. Start by understanding what SEO involves and what it takes. Then work on on-page SEO until it's fully integrated into your efforts. After that, you can expand on your SEO strategy with off-page tactics and truly start seeing the full picture come together for success.

Happy optimizing!



# ABOUT US

TwinEngine is an award-winning, strategic marketing and creative agency that provides organizations with a way of managing their brand to help them stand out, take off and stay on course.

For over 25 years of success, Winnie Brignac Hart and Lorrie Brignac Lee have been leveraging their twin talents (left brain/ right brain thinking) and consulting with companies to help them grow their businesses by delivering strategic and creative solutions to reach their destinations.

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TwinEngine is a certified HubSpot partner. To learn more about HubSpot, check them out at *HubSpot.com*.

