



## 54. How to Get to Page One on Google (Without Hiring an SEO Expert)

00:04

I'm Janice Hostager. After three decades in the marketing business and many years of being an entrepreneur, I've learned a thing or two about marketing. Join me as we talk about marketing, small business and life in between. Welcome to My Weekly Marketing.

00:34

So you decide to open a business, you have a beautiful website and you're waiting to get business from it, but people are not finding it so frustrating. So, a funny story. When I created my first website, it was for custom invitations. I was so nervous to go live because I thought these people would be coming to my site and I wouldn't be ready for them, that I was going to get so much business that I was going to be overwhelmed by all of it. Now I look back and completely laugh at how I could have ever thought that would happen.

01:06

And anybody that's ever launched a website will know that it takes a while for, number one, to have your website be ranked or indexed at all by the search engines and, number two, even when it is indexed by the search engines. There are so many sites with more than 200 million active websites out there that's a 2024 number that it's hard to get traffic to your website. Can I hear an amen from somebody? It's tough, let me tell you. So today I want to talk about something that so many of us struggle with and that is getting found on Google or other search engines, but you don't need to hire a professional or an SEO expert. Many of these things are easy to do and will make such a big difference in how many people find your site. Everyone wants to rank on page one of Google. What you need to remember is that there are various terms you can rank for and many pages on your site that may rank, so getting to page one isn't all that hard, depending on the term that you're trying to rank for, if you employ a few tricks that we're going to talk about here today. So let's start out by clarifying a few terms.

02:14

When we talk about ranking on page one of Google, what we're actually talking about is search engine optimization, also called SEO for short, and the good news is that SEO basics don't require a lot of technical know-how, and there are a few things that every site should include, and that's what we're going to talk about today. First of all, you need to know that your website is created for two entities. Number one, of course, is your visitor, and number two is the search engine. Google tells us it's most important to focus on the customer first, so that's what you should always do, and they've gotten pretty good about picking up indicators. That's what you're doing, but there are a few more things that Google likes to see that are a little more behind the scenes. The challenge is that, because there are so many websites on the internet, getting your website listed on the first page of the search results can be challenging, but the good news is that there are 85 billion people who search on Google every month. So, using various terms and

living in various places, we can do things that will increase your odds of showing up on page one of the search engine results for your target customer.

03:26

And I want you to keep in mind that SEO is a longer game. So, for example, a change that you make today may not have an impact for a few weeks, but once you have it set up, once you have your SEO set up, it can help you over and over again. So it's not like ads or social media that need a ton of changing and updating. Once you get it up and running, tweaks here and there will help you, but it's not as time intensive as some other forms of marketing. So before we dive into the nitty gritty of SEO essentials, it's critical to have some of the groundwork in place, and these are things that are best to do when you're in the process of building your site.

04:07

And the first thing is your domain URL. So having a domain name that's short and easy to remember is a good start, and you want to make sure that, of course, that it's related to your business. You want to avoid hyphens if possible and get a domain name that ends in like a com or net or co. More of the common extensions there's some really obscure and weird extensions out there right now, including I saw this week *ninja directory tv*. I actually saw *suck on GoDaddy Super weird*. So stick to the more common extensions when you're picking out a domain URL. If you have a URL you're not really happy with, let's say you have a hyphen in it you can easily buy a URL that you do like if it's available, and you can put a redirect on your site that will send people to a different one. So there are ways to work around a URL if you have one you're not really happy with.

05:09

The second thing you want to make sure of doing before you start doing. Some of the other things are the site structure. So you have to ask yourself, does the pages make sense, the way they're grouped? For example, if you own a boutique, you want to have it in a logical hierarchy, for example, such as a women's clothes, then pants, then jeans or crop pants, for example. Or if you sell jewelry, then have a breakdown of jewelry, then bracelets, then charm bracelets, and so on. You want to make sure this is reflected in the URL for each page. So it might say *myshop.com/women/jewelry/bracelets/charm-bracelets*. Does that make sense? This will not only make it easier for your site visitor, which will make Google happy too, but your site structure is also a ranking factor for your SEO that Google looks at. Okay. So once we get those two basics out of the way, I'm going to talk about seven different things that you should do to bump up your SEO ranking on your site.

06:21

Ready, okay, number one keyword research. You've probably heard of keywords. They are absolutely crucial in SEO. Now, when I say keywords, what I mean is keywords and phrases. For example, if you're a photographer, you probably won't rank with the keyword *photographer* just because there are so, so many photographers out there with huge, huge budgets that have been in business for ages and ages. So it's not probably a word you're going to rank for, but you should research words that are more specific to what you do, like *pet photography* or *baby photography* and so on, because fewer people are going to be ranking for those terms, because fewer people do those specialties, those phrases *pet photography* it's obviously two words *baby photography* two words. That's what Google calls a long tail keyword. So even though they're a phrase, search engines consider them a keyword. So I just want to make sure our terminology

is clear. So, going back to the photography example, if you also add a location marker so pet photography, temecula, california, or dog photography near me, or dog photography near me that keyword phrase is also going to be higher ranked, easier to higher rank for than the general term photographer Hope. All that makes sense. So the more specific the terms, the less competition that there is. And if you want to rank for location, if you're a location-based business, then you want to make sure that your location is listed on your site and it becomes a keyword as well.

08:10

So keyword research is the process of identifying the specific words and phrases that people use when they go to Google to search for a solution to their problem. So keywords are those words, and you'll want to include the exact words people are searching for on your site, and that's why research is so important. The first step here is to really understand your ideal customer and the pain points that they have and the words that they will be typing in to look for a solution to their problem. We can take a pretty good guess about what those words are, but there's actually some excellent tools, some of which are free to use, that will help you do some research to see exactly what those words are. Sometimes you'll find out that when you do your research that adding or switching up a word in a phrase can make a huge difference in terms of keywords. So I'll give you the information in a minute here about where to go for those.

09:09

But you also need to know that you need to put those keywords in specific places on your page. The best place to add them are in your title of your page, one or more subtitles, your body text, your alt text, and those are the words that are in the back end of photos or images, and in the metadata, which, again, I'll talk about in a bit. Here's what you should not do: Adding your keyword everywhere on the page so it sounds unnatural is a down ranking factor. So keep it focused for your visitor rather than the search engines. Okay, so first off, I recommend setting up a free account on Moz.com or Ubersuggest.com and then you'll have some access to keyword searches and then brainstorm relevant topics and keywords for each page of your site. You can use ChatGPT for this, which is a great way to generate some ideas. But at the time of this recording, chatgpt doesn't have the capability to do keyword research for you. So you can get ideas off ChatGPT, but it's not going to really be able to tell you whether or not how many people are searching for that word.

10:20

So use the keywords in your content and monitor and adjust your strategy as you go along here. So, for example, you may want to add a keyword to a page but you're finding out that it's still not ranking, so you may want to adjust what that keyword is and put it in different places on your page, and so on. So there are a lot of things that you can switch up as time goes on, but the best thing to do to start out with is just get started and put your keywords in. For example, a vegan restaurant could use keywords like vegan restaurant near me or best vegan food in its website copy and at their blog post, by the way, and then that will improve their online visibility. So long tail keywords are longer, more specific phrases that people use when they're close to making a purchase. They tend to have less competition and higher conversion rates. So that's what I was talking about earlier, when we were talking about photography, and the interesting thing is that people put in longer phrases when they're closer to making a purchase, which I think is super interesting, a behavior that we can take note of.

11:30

As marketers, you'll also want to check out the keywords that your competitors are using, especially the ones that are getting more search traffic than you are, so you can see what they're ranking for. You can do this on Moz or also a site called similarweb.com. I'll put the links to all of these in the show notes for today. Then, when you do keyword research, you should be able to see in your research. Number one, how many people are searching for that specific keyword or phrase each month. Number two, how difficult it is to rank for that specific keyword based on your competition with other websites, and you'll want to look for words that have a high search volume and low competition. So that's like the holy grail of search, right? You want to search for terms that everybody's looking for and nobody else is doing. It's hard to find, but there's going to be better and worse options for you. So some other suggested keywords that you may want to consider.

12:30

It's good to use synonyms and similar phrases to avoid keyword cannibalization, which is where your pages start to compete against each other on your own search result pages. So you want to choose a different keyword for every page of your site. I track mine on a spreadsheet to keep track of them, and I find that's a good way of doing. It Doesn't need to be complex. It just helps me remember what keyword I'm using on different blog posts, especially if you're blogging or putting out content, because after a while you kind of forget did I, do you know what was the keyword on this page, and so on. So it's really good to do that, especially if you've got a larger site.

13:11

Also, something I like to think about is that Google talks a lot about search intent. So Google classifies searches into four different categories. They're either informational, navigational, transactional or commercial, so they can tell the search intent based on the words people search for. So where your customers are in their journey, or what I call the trail to the sale, factors into how they search. For example, an informational search might start with words phrased as questions, and they use words like who did this or what, or where, or why or how Right? Navigational queries or questions that they type in could be something like Starbucks near me or Google login. So if they just want information right, or directions to something Transactional, these are specific to a brand such as Apple Watch on sale or Disney Plus free trial Okay, that's transactional. And commercial queries are words to suggest that they're doing research before a purchase, such as best lawn mowers or inexpensive coffee tables, things like that. So think in these terms when you're choosing keywords for your page or website, including your blog posts Like. Think about what is their search intent when they are looking for information that I'm sharing on this page and that will help you determine what types or what categories of keywords you should use. Okay, whew, that was a ton of information, but I hope it makes sense.

14:53

The second thing that you need to do with SEO is create content. The second thing that you need to do with SEO is create content. Content is a ranking factor that's way up on the top of SEO essentials. Creating regular optimized content, or keyword optimized content, is one of the easiest ways to get organic traffic to your website. If you neglect your site's content so I mean blog content or other types of content that you're putting out there then you're doing yourself a

huge disservice. Content keeps people on your site. This signals to the search engines that you're providing relevant and useful information. Another great thing about content it's where your keywords go. If you want organic traffic, you can't ignore keywords, as we just talked about. If you're not sure what content to include, I'd suggest creating content pillars, and I have an article about that that I'll link in the show notes. There's also a tool that I recommend called Yoast SEO. If you have a WordPress site, they can really help you when you're putting together your blog posts to make sure that your keywords are included in the right place, and a lot of other factors that will kind of give you a flag if you are missing some things.

16:09

So here are a few tips about writing content on your website. So you want to write clearly and concisely. You want to make sure it's easy to skim, so you want to add images and subheads along the way. You can also use AI. Google said it's okay to use AI, but I'd really recommend adding personal stories or something else to make it sound not like AI, right? Because after a while AI content really does sound pretty generic and you're not probably going to rank real high with content that was created on ChatGPT. So I always use it. If I'm going to use it, I use it for an outline or an idea, but I go ahead and write it myself. It may seem obvious, but you want to include your target keywords to optimize it, and you always want to end each blog post with a call to action. So it could be a call, it could be for more information, [click here](#).

17:12

You can kind of mix it up. You want to ideally include different types of content. You might want to include infographics, case studies, anything to inform, educate or entertain. See which one resonates best with your audience too, and that will help you kind of get a direction about what they're looking for. And you can repurpose and refresh old content, right. So I'm sure you may probably have a backlog of content. If you have been in business for a while and it's helpful to refresh some of that as things change or just to give it some new content, repurposing your old content is actually one of the best ways to get the most value from it is actually one of the best ways to get the most value from it. So, for example, long form content could become an ebook or a series in a newsletter, or it could become videos and so on. So content is something Google loves, and go out there and create it, okay so.

18:14

Number three optimize your meta descriptions and title tags. This is where, when I work with clients on this, their eyes are to glaze over. The meta description is the little paragraph that shows up on Google when you see your page listed. Okay so on the Google results page, when you see your page listed up, it will have the title on top and then it will have a little paragraph underneath. These are kind of like under the trunk on your page, so you need to access them from the back end of your page. So the meta descriptions and title tags tell search engines what your site is all about and your pages are all about. So optimizing them can improve your website search engine ranking and it'll drive more traffic to them. So think they can improve your website search engine ranking and it'll drive more traffic to them.

19:00

So think of meta descriptions as a quick little sales pitch. So, in writing short and effective meta descriptions and title tags that include keywords, your click through rates should improve. So you want to make sure that those paragraphs are relevant to the content on the page to decrease your bounce rate. And it's also a good thing to put a little pitch in there saying learn

more here or something like that. Quick tips for crafting your meta descriptions and title tags. So you want to include keywords and you want to make sure that they're close to the beginning of the title and the paragraph. That is something that Google just asked for, so that's what we do. You want to keep them short and concise, too, so you don't need to put a lot of content in there, because they get cut off by the search engines. So there's just a certain number of characters that you can include, and I think it's like 150 characters, so you gotta keep them short, okay, so that is optimizing your meta descriptions and title tags.

20:04

The next thing we're going to talk about is the focus on their user experience. The experience that your user has also called the UX, if you've seen that term, can have a big impact on your SEO, like we talked about earlier. That's because Google has repeatedly told us what is best for the user is best for the ranking. Google has repeatedly told us what is best for the user is best for the ranking. The design of your website may be gorgeous, but let's be honest, a user is coming to your site first to find a product or information. They care much less about how pretty your site is. They want to find what they're looking for and they want to find it probably quickly, right? Nobody wants to spend a lot of time on your site. As a marketing strategist, I know that brand is important, but at the end of the day, if your site looks amazing but doesn't provide a good user experience, it's not going to be ranking. So a few quick tips for improving your UX or your user experience.

21:00

Number one, increase your site speed. Page loading speed is one of the most important ranking factors, so you can do that in a few ways. Number one deleting plugins you don't need. If you've got a WordPress site and there's a bunch of plugins that really aren't serving your purposes. It's going to slow down your site, reducing the size of your images so they're no bigger than they need to be. Having a good host will also help with this, but so will paying attention to what you put on your page. So choose a platform that offers speedy page loading and also security.

21:38

Mobile sites can often load slower because of bad connections, so I like to limit my content to exclude bigger images and videos on my mobile site, so I hope that makes sense. So your same website that people can see on their desktop site can also be found on the mobile site. But you can make adjustments to that mobile site, just for the mobile or just for the desktop or just for the tablet size. Okay, the next thing you can do to improve your UX is to simplify your navigation, similar to what we talked about earlier on making sure your main website's menu is simple, logical and easier to understand, and avoid overwhelming people with too many options. So use sub menus or drop down menus to organize pages or put secondary and unimportant pages in the footer of your site.

22:36

The third thing to do to improve your user experience is to reduce pop ups. Too many pop-ups and ads are distracting, particularly on mobile, and ads especially slow down your loading time. Have you ever gone to one of those recipe sites where you're just hoping to get a quick recipe but instead you feel like you're being assaulted by all the ads? Yeah, that's poor user experience. Okay, number five. Okay number five places to improve your seo prioritize mobile.

23:11

Google has adopted a mobile first approach to indexing and, depending on your business, you may want to design for mobile first too. If you look at your Google Analytics, you should be able to see how the majority of your visitors view your content. If they're on a desktop computer, tablet or on a mobile device, then you should prioritize that for your design. So in 2024, more than 60% of website visitors come from mobile devices. So if you're not sure, you should assume that people are on their mobile device when they view your site.

23:42

There's a free tool that you can add as a Google Chrome extension, called Google's Lighthouse Tool for Chrome. I'll link to it in the show notes, so all you need to do is add it to your Google Chrome toolbar. If you use Chrome as a browser, then go to your website and click the extension up in the toolbar and it will scan your mobile site and give you a report. When I did it for my own site, it was very eye-opening. I thought I was doing well and it turned out I had some work to do Also on your mobile site.

24:12

You want to make sure that the buttons are large enough for bigger fingers and the text is large enough for people to read on a mobile site without having to like, pinch and zoom. At least 16 pixels for the text size. You want to keep your content short and scannable. This is good SEO practice in general, but even more important when people are reading it on phones. And you want to simplify forms and checkout processes. Minimize and simplify fields to make them easy to fill out on a mobile device. You want to also optimize for local SEO on your mobile device. So think about how we use our phones. Often it is to get directions or to make reservations, and we can be out and about and we can take care of something on the go. So make those a priority on your mobile device so that people can do the things they do on mobile easier on their phones, if that made sense. Plus, mobile specific services, such as click to call, can be very helpful for viewers too.

25:13

And the number six thing that we want to do is build links on our website. So Google loves links, and so should you. Backlinks from high authority sites send a trust signal to Google. It's like having somebody vouch for you, right? The more people that vouch for you, the more trustworthy you are. So if you've got a high ranking site linking to your site, google's going to say, wow, this site must be legit, okay. So while search engine algorithms may change, links stay a constant authority builder over time and they have since the beginning. So they're definitely worth the trouble to try and get bigger, more trustworthy sites to link to your site. So to do that, you want to create high quality, valuable content, so that's one of the most natural ways to get people to link back to your site. If it's something that makes others in your industry go wow, they will be able to. They'll put a link in their site and link to you, right?

26:17

And you want to contribute guest posts or articles? So reach out to prominent websites or blogs in your area of expertise and offer to write guest posts or articles. So reach out to prominent websites or blogs in your area of expertise and offer to write guest posts or articles. Everybody loves it when somebody writes an article for their site and it's a ranking factor. So you're writing a blog post. You want to link to other pages you have on your site. You also want to link to pages that are outside of your site. Also want to link to pages that are outside of your site. All right, two things.

26:48

Working with other organizations on projects, events or on publications offers an opportunity to generate links back to your website too. So if you've got somebody that you've teamed up with that you're doing a promotion with, they can link back to you too, and that will help you link to each other. They can link back to you, too, and that will help you link to each other. And also, like industry or professional associations also have online directories and listings for your business, and they tend to be fairly high ranked, and that's an easy way to get a link from a high authority site. Think about the Chamber of Commerce or an association that you belong to related to your business.

27:26

Okay, last but not least, number seven measures your results. I am not a math person. I hit the math wall at algebra one, but I do recognize that numbers tell a story, and I do love some good key performance indicators, and this stuff is not difficult math. These are elementary school charts and graphs that can help you realize what's working and what's not. The ultimate goal of implementing SEO essentials is to drive more organic traffic to your website. By monitoring your SEO strategy performance over time, you can use the data to make decisions about how to improve it right, and it will help you boost your website ranking in search engines. After all, business is all about numbers.

28:12

Okay, a few tips. Number one: define clear performance indicators, or your KPIs. So what should you focus on? For my clients and my own site? I look at keyword rankings, organic traffic, bounce rate, backlinks, conversion rate and page load speed.

28:34

I think the most important thing is just to pay attention to what's happening with your SEO, because we get busy with our business and these things kind of slip to the back burner, don't they? So I always make sure that I check my Google analytics every month. I track them regularly, I put it on my calendar and I do reports for my clients on one day a month as well. On that day, I pulled together all my metrics that I'm tracking, including also email metrics and other social media metrics, and then I go into Google Analytics and pull this information from my SEO as well. The reason I do it on a regular basis is because I won't see a problem unless I get familiar with what is normal and establish some benchmarks, right? So I need to know what my competitors are doing and I need to know what normal looks like for me, and then I can spot a problem if I do so.

29:35

I hope that this SEO primer helped you out today. Once you get used to looking for things that we talked about, it will not seem overwhelming or daunting and in fact, it will pay off big time for your business. Anyone can do these things and reap the benefits. But I also know I put a ton of information in today's episode, so I do have a free checklist that I'll put in my show notes for today. You <https://myweeklymarketing.com/54>. That's episode 54. I really do want to encourage you to download that so you can reap the benefits of good SEO. After all, nobody wants to pay to have a website that's buried on the internet somewhere, right? Thanks so much for joining me today. If you found this at all helpful. I'd so appreciate a review on Apple Podcasts. If you have any questions, please DM me on [Instagram at @Janice Janice Hostager Marketing](#). Thank you again. See you next week. Bye for now.