

## eCourse Outline

### *Search Engine Optimization Part 1: How to Tame Googlebot and Grow Your Traffic*

#### 1. What is SEO?

- a. "SEO" = Search Engine Optimization
- b. **Goal of SEO strategy** - to generate more traffic, which leads to more conversions and revenue
  - i. Expand website's visibility in organic search results ("organic" = not paid, or the regular search results that aren't pay-per-click ads)
  - ii. Move website up toward the top of search results for search keywords, phrases, and questions relevant to your business
- c. SEO is a "black box" problem, because Google and other search companies don't share their search algorithms.

#### 2. How Search Engines Work

- a. Google has 90% of the search market share, so optimize for Google's search results.
- b. **3 Steps to Search Results**
  - i. **Crawl**
    1. Google's massive software system, called Googlebot, methodically crawls billions of pages of the web to collect information.
    2. Googlebot's crawling software has a desktop version and a mobile version. If your site was built within the past few years (as of 2022), your site's primary crawler is the mobile version. So be sure your site is VERY mobile-friendly!
  - ii. **Index**
    1. After Googlebot has pulled the information from a page, its job is to extract the content that's meaningful to Google's search results algorithms.
    2. This part of the process is where Google actually interacts with your content, which means you want to optimize heavily for this part of the process.

### iii. **Serve**

1. Most visible part of the process – where Google shows the end user a page of search results based on their search query
2. We know the *least* about this part of the process, but we know a few important pieces of info about how Google serves results today:
  - a. Language/locations
  - b. Page speed/mobile-friendliness
  - c. Rich results

### c. **Search Intent via Language Models**

- i. Search intent = the reason search is valuable. A user's query shows their *intent* to do something, or the purpose of their search.

#### ii. **Types of Search Intent**

1. Transactional intent – user wants to buy something during current search session
2. Commercial investigation – user is not ready to buy *now*, but is researching something they intend to buy later
3. Navigational intent – user knows where they want to go, e.g. “Twitter login” or “Concord Monitor”
4. Informational intent – user is looking for information on a topic. May be related to future transaction; hard to distinguish between informational intent and commercial investigation

#### iii. **Relevance**

1. Most important concept in search
2. Google's aim is to present the user with the most relevant results based on their query
3. Plays huge role in search results/rankings

### 3. **How to Improve your Placement in Search Results**

- i. **On-Page SEO** – optimizing web page content for search engines; primary tool in SEO toolbox
- ii. **Writing/Content Creation** – top priority is text content on website pages
  1. How to determine topics
    - a. Good, old-fashioned searching
      - i. Use incognito search window so your results aren't personalized for you
      - ii. Try to search as your target end users would.
      - iii. Interpret the results from the perspective of Googlebot: what is it about each result that is relevant to the intent you showed in your query

2. Competitor research
  - a. Do some (incognito) searches that make your competitors show up on search results, and analyze your query and results. (What was your query? What intent did it demonstrate? What content on their website did Googlebot target as relevant to your query?)
  - b. Keep a list or spreadsheet of your findings; this will be helpful in coming up with your own effective content.
3. SERP (search engine results page) analysis tools
  - a. Paid analysis tools can be very helpful, with specific data available for your industry, locale, and competitors.
  - b. A few reputable places to start:
    - i. [Moz](#)
    - ii. [SEMRush](#)
    - iii. [Ahrefs](#)

### iii. Keywords

1. SEO focus today is on clear, readable focused content; big lists of keywords will hurt your search placement.
2. BUT, keywords and key phrases are still useful if you use them correctly.
3. Great free tool for keyword research – Google Ads Keyword Planner (find an online tutorial)
4. **How many keywords or keyphrases per page?** 4-8 is a good rule of thumb, w/ this hierarchy:
  - a. **Target keywords/primary keywords** – focus of your article; choose it based on your research and knowledge of your customers
  - b. **Secondary keywords** – complementary to your primary keyword; probably slight variations to that target keyword that mean virtually the same thing
  - c. **Additional keywords** – related and still mean generally the same thing; are probably less common ways of talking about the primary concept, and have a lower search volume than primary/secondary keywords
5. **Headings/Page Title**
  - a. Page title tells the search engine what the page is about; use your primary keyword.

- b. Break up text content with headings. Headings should flow like an outline. (Creating an outline first, and using nested headings based on that outline is a great content writing practice!)

**6. Style/Tone**

- a. Writing should be simple, clear, and focused
- b. Tone should be informed by brand identity

**7. Rich Content**

- a. Content beyond just text, e.g. images, video, and audio
- b. Great for users, but Googlebot doesn't understand them as well
- c. Use appropriate meta tags to tell Googlebot why they're important/relevant/helpful. (Meta tags are covered in Part 2.)

**8. Outbound Links**

- a. Links that send a user away from your website
- b. Beneficial to SEO when done well
- c. Should send users only to trustworthy sites, and to pages on those sites that are relevant to your on-page content.
- d. Great way for a new website to show Google what its pages are about

**9. Internal Links**

- a. Links to other pages on your own website
- b. Should provide the user w/ pages that are relevant or the obvious next step
- c. Example: if your page provides info about a specific white water rafting product and your business runs white water rafting trips, be sure to link directly to the page where a user can book a trip.