angelfish
MARKETING

BEGINNER'S GUIDE TO

Getting Started with SEO

Beginner's guide to getting started with SEO

SEO is a huge topic. There are whole websites dedicated to it, constantly publishing the latest news and best practices. It can all seem a bit overwhelming, especially when you get started.

Implementing effective SEO solutions is a big part of inbound marketing, and while it is a large topic, there are also a few things that you can do when you get started that will get you off on the right track.

In this guide, we cover the most important elements to get right when you first start, divided into two sections: on-page and off-page SEO.

Research your main keywords

First of all, let's look at keywords. Keywords play a key role in both on-page and off-page SEO, so you need to know what they are.

angelfish
MARKETING

When someone types in a relevant query into the search engines, you want your website to show up in the search results. You, therefore, need to optimise your site and content for the keywords that people might use to search for your products and services.

For example, if you run a bakery in Birmingham, you might want to show up when people search for words like 'bakery Birmingham', 'cheap birthday cakes' or 'fresh bread delivery', so these are the keywords you want to target.

Keyword research is a big topic. But rather than cover the whole thing here, we'll point you to our free guide: 'Keywords: A Comprehensive Guide for Beginners'. This will tell you everything you need to know to come up with your list of initial keywords to target.

On-page SEO strategy basics

On-page SEO involves all the things that you can do to optimise your website on the website itself, and this is where you should start with your SEO.

Many companies forget about this. They don't take the time to optimise their sites properly at the start, and as a result, they end up putting in more work than they need to when they start building links.

Here are the most important steps to take to optimise your site with on-page SEO tactics.

angelfish
MARKETING

Speed it up

Your website speed is an important ranking signal ('signal' is the term given to factors that affect ranking). You should, therefore, put every effort into making your web pages load as fast as possible.

This provides a better user experience – and that's what the search engines want to provide their users when they suggest links for them.

This can get a bit technical, and you might want some help from a web developer. But start by checking your site using Google's PageSpeed Tools, which will tell you how fast your site is at the moment as well as providing you with some steps you can take to speed it up.
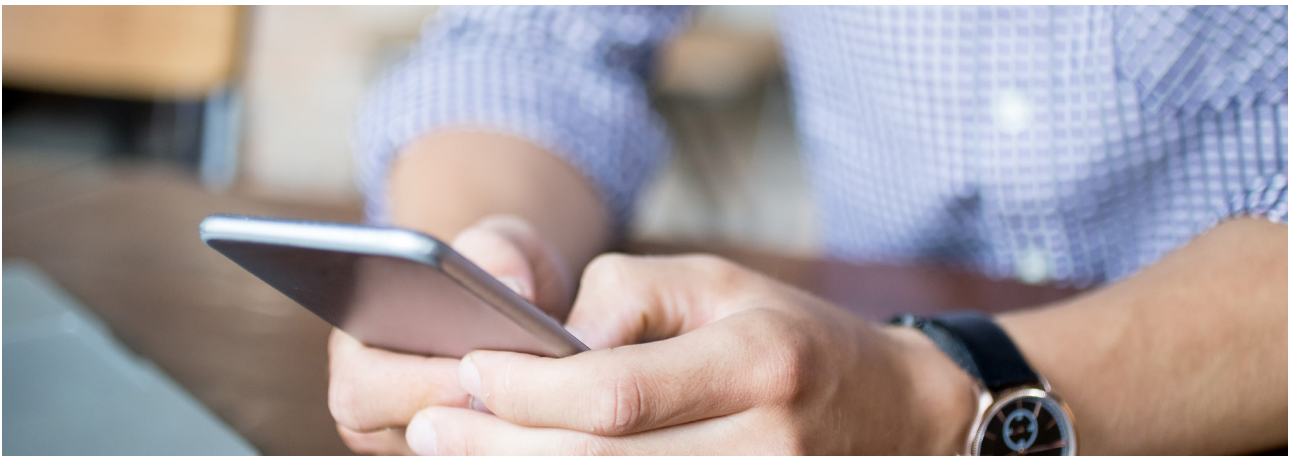
Optimise your site for mobile

More people now access websites using mobile devices than on desktops, and that means you need to make your site mobile-friendly. Rand Fishkin (former CEO of Moz) suggests that a mobile-friendly version of your website is essential to every business due to people's internet usage habits and the impact it can have on mobile traffic.

In terms of SEO, Google now gives preference to mobile-optimised sites in mobile search. That essentially means that if your site is not mobile friendly, you're potentially missing out on a huge amount of traffic.

angelfish
MARKETING

A responsive website is the best option. Google likes responsive sites, and they display properly on any device, so talk to a web designer to find out how they can improve your site.

Post fresh content regularly

You will also need unique content on your site, with your primary focus on creating valuable content that your target audience will want to read and share. Creating content regularly provides more online visibility for your website and it could help support business growth according to HubSpot.

Make an effort to publish a new blog post every week (or more if you can), and remember to focus on keywords in your content.

Brainstorm the topics that your target audience want to read, and ask your customers for their opinions. Research the top trending topics in your niche, find the most-read blogs on your competitors' websites, use BuzzSumo to find out what sorts of topics are getting the most reads and shares.

Also, follow good web copywriting practices. Use a header tag (h1) for the headline, divide it up into subheadings and use bullet points where appropriate – all of which make the content easier to read.

Your ultimate aim is to get people to read, share and link to this content. But the mere fact that you are publishing fresh content regularly will help with your SEO.

Use meta data for all new content

Every time you publish a new piece of content, ensure you create a page title and meta description that utilise your keywords if you can fit them in. Optimising your meta descriptions will encourage user click-throughs from SERPs. Your meta description is your opportunity to advertise to internet searchers and showcase that your content is relevant to their search according to Moz.

A page title is usually within 60 characters of length and you can see an example of this below:
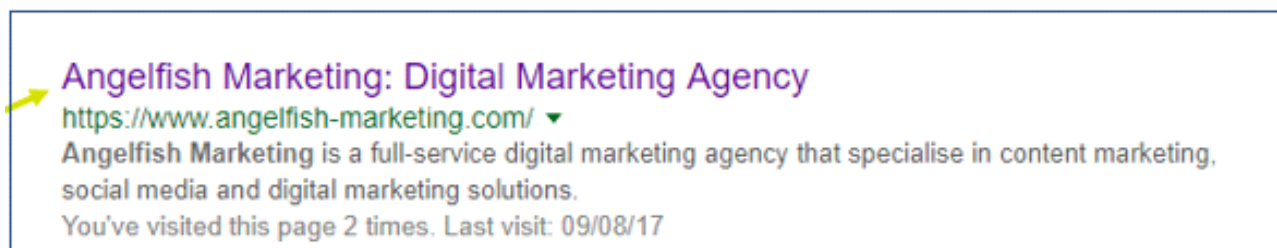
Meta descriptions are usually within 160 characters of length. We've included an example of an optimised meta description below:
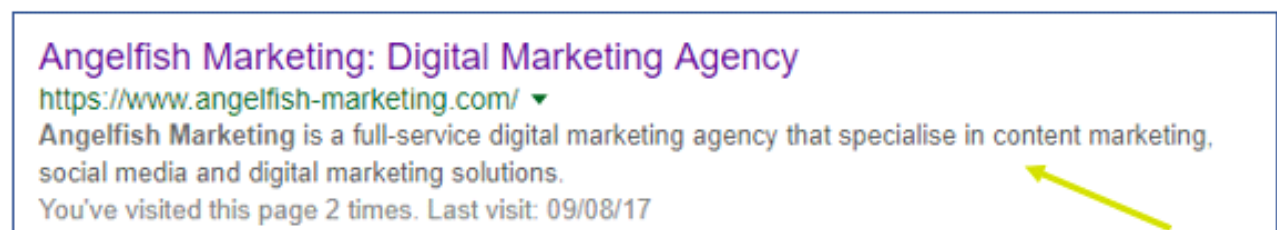
These will show up in the search results, and your aim is to encourage the searcher to click on the link. As a result, try to write them in a compelling way that will generate more clicks.

Optimise each URL

You should also optimise the URL for every web page you publish. Don't use a random set of symbols like some websites do. Instead, create a short and compelling description that utilises your main keyword, and provide information on what the page is about. An example URL that works well is:

https://www.angelfish-marketing.com/seo-solutions/

This URL has a keyword focus which is clear to search engines and it is short and but descriptive to the user.

Link out to other pages

Link to your other blog posts and web pages as well as linking out to other websites. When you link to another page, always ensure it is relevant and provides useful information or backs up what you are saying. A great way to link out to other blog posts is to create a pillar and cluster strategy as SEO is now shifting to this model. This model includes a single 'pillar' page (this could be an e-book) which is the main pillar of content and then you create clusters (blog posts) which link into this pillar. This helps to create a 'web' of structured links within your content, aiding in your SEO as these clusters are relevant links.

angelfish
MARKETING

Google uses relevance within it's ranking factors which means you will place higher in search engine results. You can have many random links from high authority domains but this will not have much impact due to not being relevant to your website.

Internal links have the added benefit of encouraging visitors to stay longer on your site as well as helping the search engine spiders to crawl your website. Google crawls your website using Googlebot which finds new (and updated) website pages then adds them to the Google index. As the Googlebot visits each individual web page, it registers the links on that website page and then adds these to its list of pages to crawl. You can read more about how Google crawls websites here.

Add info to your images

Images are important on websites. They look attractive, break up the content and make it more inviting. But search engines cannot read images, and as such, they do not know what they contain.

You can add information to your images using 'alt text'. Use this to add a quick description of what the image contains, and try to use your keyword if it makes sense to do so and you can fit it in naturally. Overall, it depends on what content management system you are using to create your content in order to add your alt text. A quick Google search of 'how to add alt text to your images' will show you how to do this.

Get your on-page SEO sorted

These SEO solutions will take you a long way with your on-page SEO. And while there are other more advanced areas to consider, including areas like rich snippets (which you can read about here), start with these and you'll get your website into good shape.

Off-page SEO strategy basics

While on-page SEO focuses on all of the elements that you can change on your website itself, off-page SEO involves (unsurprisingly) all of the elements that happen off your site.

This is the larger and more involved area of SEO.

Don't get us wrong: on-page SEO is crucial. But once you have optimised your website and you are focusing on the best practices (publishing content, linking out, using meta tags, etc), you need to focus your attention on off-page tactics.

This typically comes down to one main area: link building.

Why are links important?

Links are important because they suggest to the search engines that your content is worth linking to and worth visiting in the first place. If a blog post you publish gets 50 links from authority websites, that's a pretty clear sign that it contains something of value.

Promote your content

SEO all comes down to the content at the end of the day. Or, at least, you need excellent content if you want other websites to link to you.

But we've already covered this in on-page tactics, so why mention it again?

No matter how much work you put into generating links, if the content falls flat, you'll be fighting an uphill battle. But creating content is only the first stage. Once you have the high-value content in place, then you need to promote it.

If you have got your keyword targeting right, people might come across your content in the search engines. However, if you are just starting with your SEO, it's more likely that it will only get found organically once you start building more links.

The first step to your promotion strategy is to have a strong social presence. Choose a handful of networks to focus on, but LinkedIn, Twitter and Facebook are good defaults.

angelfish
MARKETING

On these social platforms, get involved and grow your community. Share other content you find interesting, make insightful comments and join in discussions. And, of course, share your own content. The larger and more engaged your community is, the more shares you will get. Although you must be sure to include a keyword focus in your social media posts. This helps Google and other search engines pick up your website for that keyword.

The more shares you get via social media, the more conversations your website is being featured in. Social may impact search engine results (although Google has not confirmed this) as more links to your content from social media may **speed up your content indexation**.

This is a long-term strategy. It may take a while before you start getting results, but if your content is good, you might be surprised by how effective it can be.

You should also make an effort to make relationships with influencers, who are typically owners of large blogs and websites in your niche. Comment on their posts and share their content, then reach out to them and share your blog posts.

Publish guest blogs

While the above technique is one of the most important for any off-page SEO strategy, results can take a while. And when you are just getting started, you will want to start

creating a strategy for generating backlinks to your website. One of the best off-page SEO solutions is to publish guest blogs.

Guest blogging involves creating a unique piece of content, just like you would for your own blog post. But instead of publishing it on your site, you contact the owner of a blog in your niche and ask to publish it on their site instead. Matt Barby - Director of Acquisition at HubSpot has a great free template that you can use to reach out to websites for guest blogging.

You give them free, unique content for their site, which all big sites need. In return, you link back to your own website in the bio at the end.


If you do this, remember a few rules:

- Only reach out to authority blogs. You don't want to build lots of worthless links from spam sites that could actually hurt your SEO efforts.

- Follow their guidelines. Many blogs will have their own set of guidelines for publishing on their site. Some might prefer you to send in an idea while some will prefer a whole article.

- Build relationships with the blog owners. Comment on their posts. Know their topics. Make suggestions. They are more likely to accept a guest blog when they know you.

angelfish
MARKETING

- Create genuinely high-quality content. The better it is, the more effective it will be, and the more likely you are to be invited back to post another guest blog.

- Promote the piece once it is published. Share it on social media and link to it. If the blog owner asks you to respond to comments, make sure you do.

- Offer people guest blogging opportunities on your own site too! This is a great way of supporting other people's content and helps build relationships with other people in your industry.

Where is your SEO at right now?

The above strategies will help you start putting effective SEO solutions into practice. However, it's always a good idea to know where you are right now. Your existing SEO might be better than you realise, or you might be making some glaring errors that need changing.

Take a look at how SEO works with inbound by downloading our guide to inbound marketing today.
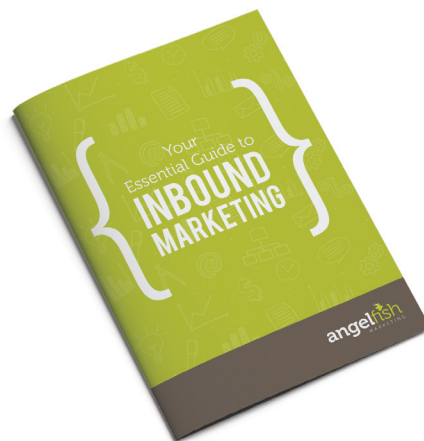
FREE DOWNLOAD
Guide to Inbound Marketing

DOWNLOAD NOW