



SEO BASICS

ESSENTIAL GUIDE FOR ENTREPRENEURS

PRESENTED BY ONTRAPORT

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ESSENTIAL GUIDE FOR ENTREPRENEURS

Entrepreneurship can be highly rewarding. Whether it's the freedom, the lifestyle, the financial liberty, or the opportunity to follow your passion — the perks of entrepreneurship are certainly tantalizing. However, the best entrepreneurs know that in order to maintain these perks, their businesses must adapt to the evolving market or die.

SEO, as an integral part of every small business marketing plan, ensures that you are delivering relevant and interesting content to your current and potential customers. But is it that easy?



**SUCCESS BREEDS
COMPLACENCY.
COMPLACENCY BREEDS
FAILURE. ONLY THE
PARANOID SURVIVE.**

- ANDY GROVE -

You've probably wondered why certain websites are on the first page of a Google search and some are relegated to page 203? Or why Google thinks you'll be more interested in the first ten websites they show you?

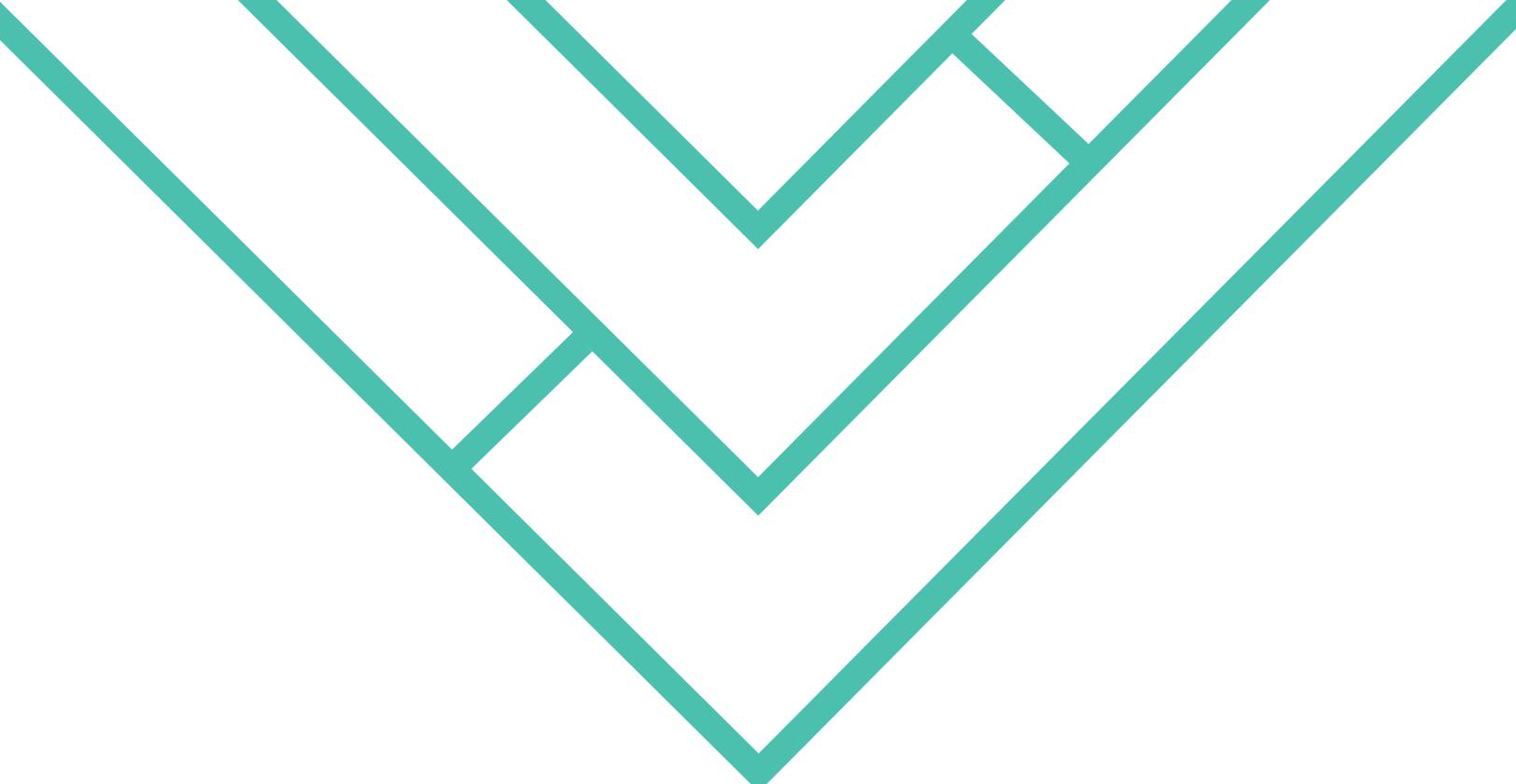
Well, Google “knows” what you and your prospects want to read—and skip—because Google is constantly updating their algorithms. While it’s important to stay on top of algorithmic trends, that isn’t what this guide is about. Instead, we’ll show you the SEO basics you need to make it into the top results of your niche’s searches.

SEO is like real estate: it’s all about location, location, location. Showing up on page one of search results means a **huge** increase in traffic to your website. **The first three items of a Google search receive [60% of the clicks](#), with a whopping 33% going to the top listed website.**

HIGHER RANKINGS = INCREASED TRAFFIC = MORE SALES

Think of it like this: It’s 1952 and you decide to open an ice cream shop. Your ice cream is delicious and your shop is amazing but, since your expertise is in making ice cream and not advertising, you decide to open without registering in the local phone book, spreading the word around town, hosting a grand opening, or even putting a sign up outside your building. It doesn’t matter that your ice cream is the best; no one knows about your shop!

Apply that example to today’s competitive online marketing landscape and you’ll see that optimizing your website for search traffic should be a huge priority for your business, and something you cannot afford to ignore any longer.



START AT
THE BEGINNING:
WHAT IS SEO?

What is SEO?

Search Engine Optimization, or SEO for short, is exactly what it sounds like: improving your website to comply with search engine standards. SEO applies specifically to organic and natural searches: real people searching for specific keywords and keyword phrases. By optimizing your website to follow Google's formula, you'll increase your website's rankings on search pages.

HIGHER RANKINGS = INCREASED TRAFFIC = MORE SALES

To help users find the best websites, search engines use complex algorithms to determine the ranking order for searched terms.

Factors that play into the algorithm's rankings include website architecture, content, links, authority and social media.

If you're just starting out, don't feel overwhelmed by terms like algorithms and architecture. We're going to identify — and walk you step-by-step — through the key components of small business SEO strategy.

Note:

While SEO refers to optimizing pages for all search engines throughout the Internet, this guide focuses solely on optimization for Google, whose index database is over two times larger than the engines of Yahoo! and Bing. Google accounts for 88% of last year's searches!

How It Works

Search engines use programs called “spiders” that constantly search the Internet, analyze content, and archive websites. Using website links to constantly “crawl” from page to page, spiders categorize and organize information into a massive index. When someone enters a search, the search engine quickly scans the archives to find the best and most relevant websites to display.

Try thinking of it like this: Professional baseball teams use scouting networks to identify the newest prospects and best talent in the game. The Director of Scouting (search engine) has a team of scouts (spiders) who scour the globe (crawl the Internet), search for the best players (websites), and categorize each player based on performance, potential, and position. When the Director of Scouting needs to find a new player for his team, he can easily find the exact player he needs via the archives of scouting reports.

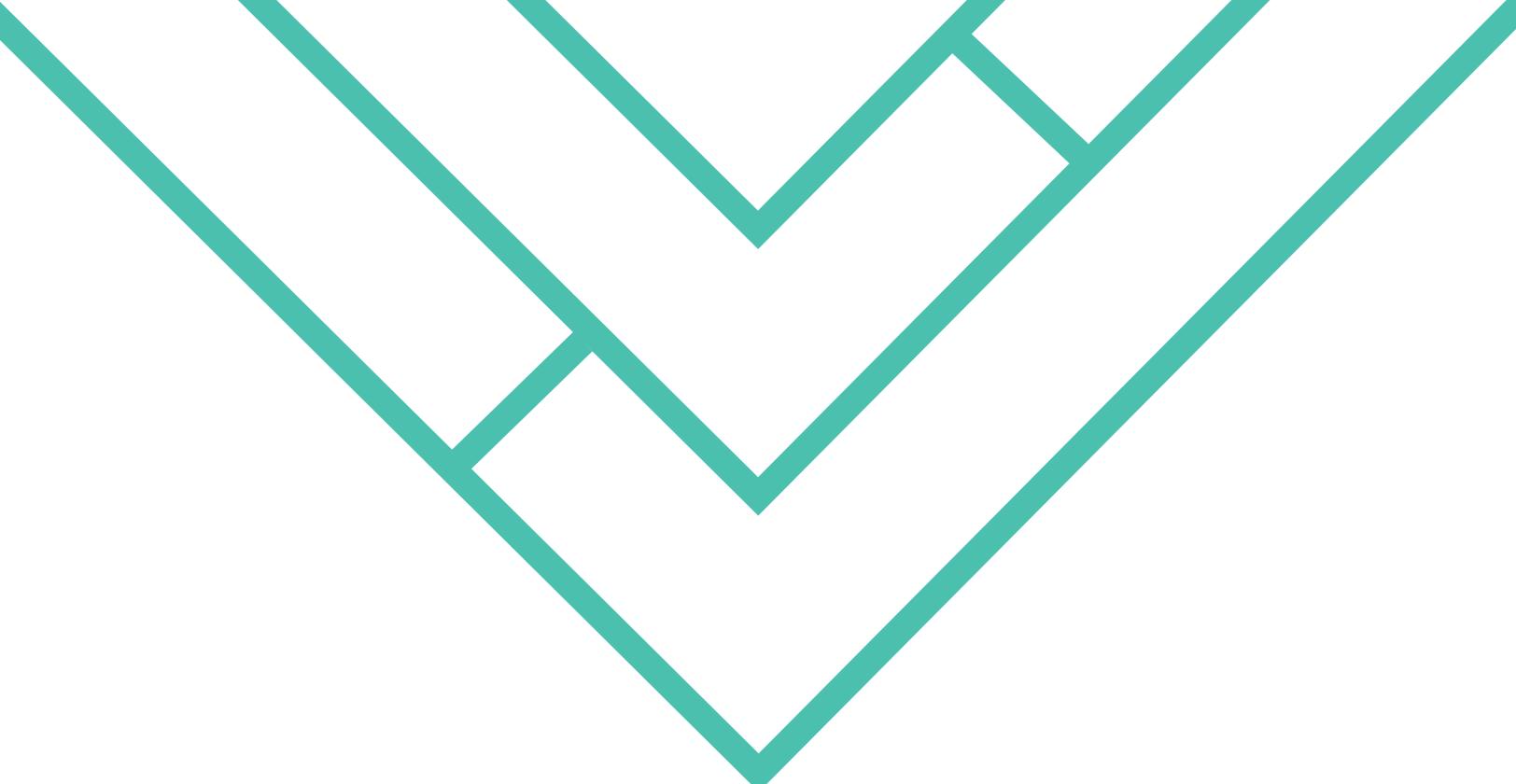
The most relevant and SEO-optimized websites show up higher on the rankings page for that specific search and consequently get more attention than those ranked lower on search pages.

IN ITS SIMPLEST FORM, SEO IS THE COMBINATION OF:

Making it as easy as possible for spiders to find and correctly categorize your website.



Incorporating the key factors that search engines use to rank websites on your own site.



THE **CURRENT** **STATE** OF SEO

In the past, SEO revolved around [singular keywords and high numbers of backlinks](#). However, people began to take advantage of these simple algorithms and started finding ways to “cheat” search engines because a top ranking yielded such a high financial return. Businesses were creating their websites for the search engines and not for the users.

In order to combat this, Google changed their algorithms and haven't stop tweaking since 2011's [Panda update](#). Search engines are much smarter these days — they're now [programmed](#) to understand human thought processes.



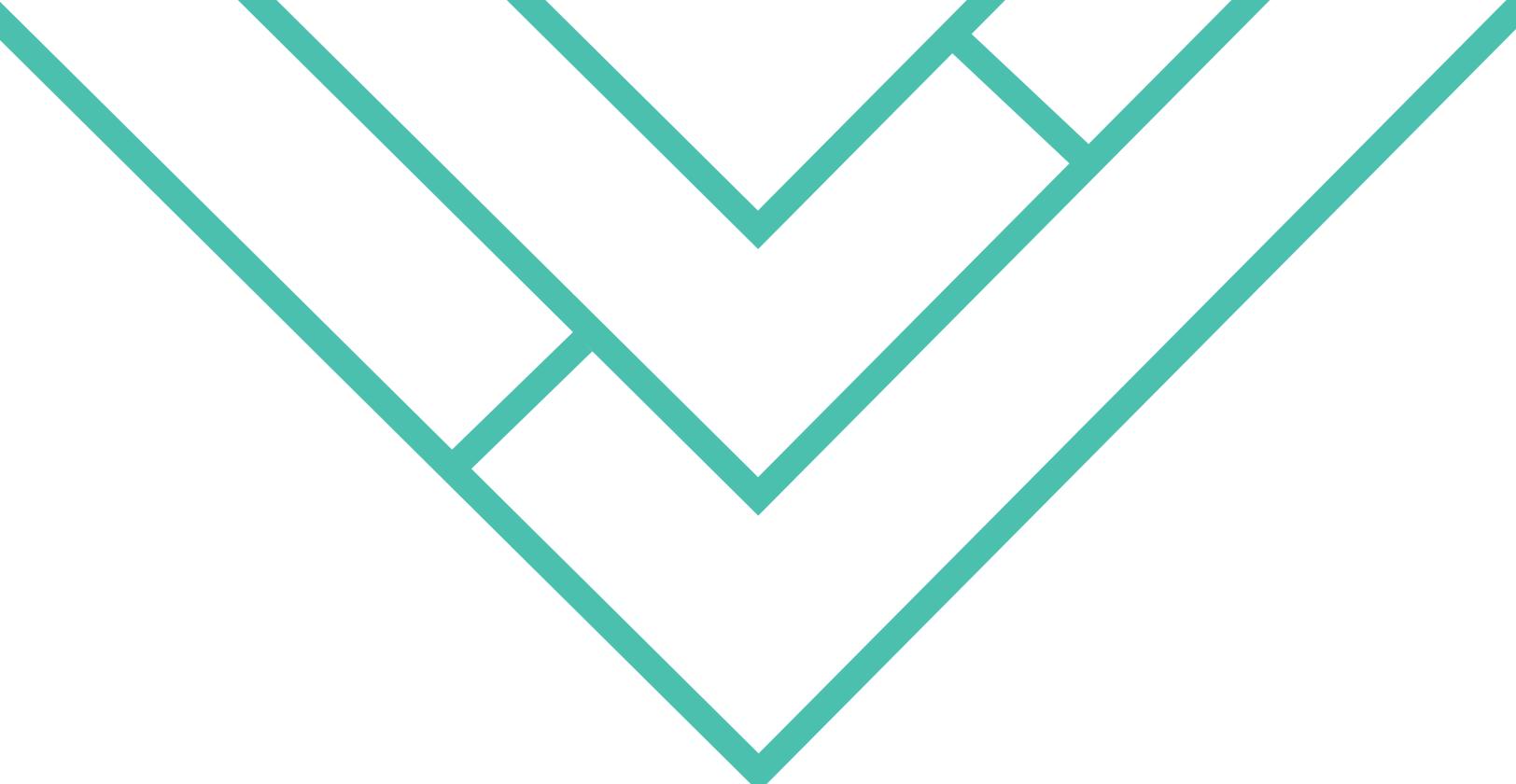
IF I SEARCH FOR ‘MOVIE ABOUT TIGER ON BOAT’ GOOGLE WILL LIKELY UNDERSTAND THAT I AM ASKING ABOUT THE MOVIE ‘LIFE OF PI’, NOT ABOUT PAGES OPTIMIZED FOR THOSE SPECIFIC KEYWORDS.

- CYRUS SHEPARD, MOZ -

So *old* SEO strategies such as stuffing your website with thousands of keywords and utilizing spammy backlinks won't get you a higher ranking or more visitors. In fact, you'll actually be punished by Google for trying to trick it. Today, SEO clout is given to highly engaging websites that feature quality content and deliver the best user experiences.

Search engines determine quality websites by monitoring “user signals,” or how users interact with your website. Click-through rates, bounce rates, and time spent on the site are stats that indicate a good user experience. If click-throughs from search pages are high and people are staying on your site, then you are doing a good job of complying with Google's new SEO standards.

SEO has evolved to make the Internet a better place for the user. By following basic guidelines created with the user top of mind, you can ensure your website is SEO optimized.



SEO BEST PRACTICES

Make Google (and visitors) love your website
and supercharge your SEO.

Keywords

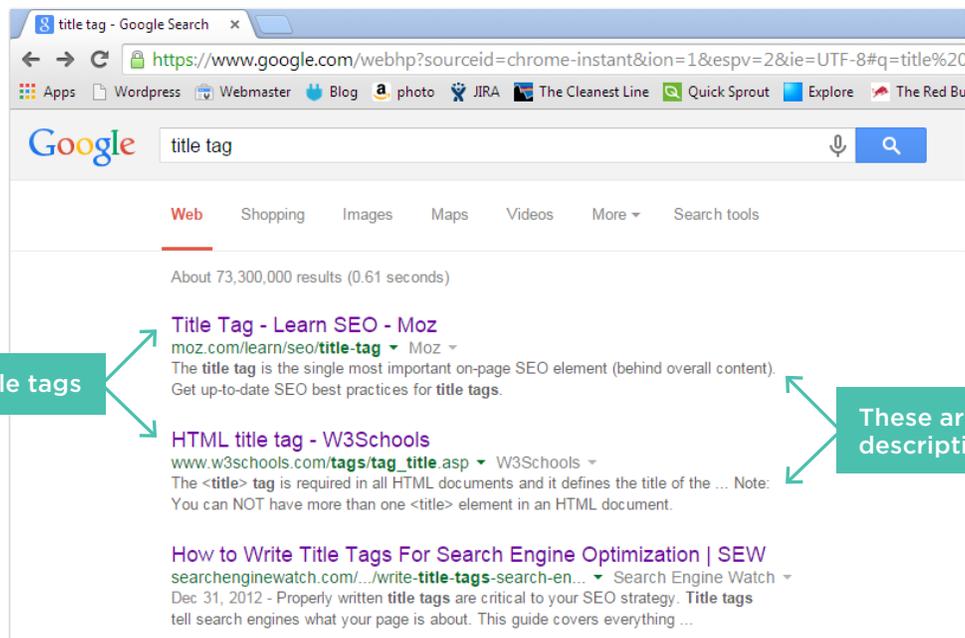
Keywords are the specific words or phrases that people search for in Google. They have always been a crucial part of great SEO and are the basis of an effective online marketing campaign. Using the right keywords on your website will help your business show up higher in the search rankings.

- Keywords should be used naturally in website content and HTML code.
- Avoid using the meta keywords tag, `<meta name="keywords" content="example, keyword, keyword phrase, etc.">`. Google no longer uses it in its ranking algorithms and it can even be classified as spam.

*Learn more about keywords in the **Keyword Research** section below.*

Title Tags and Meta Descriptions

Title tags and meta descriptions are two basic and crucial aspects of SEO. They are critical in making your web pages stand out in Google's search rankings.



Title Tags

Title tags, or page titles, tell the users and spiders exactly what a web page will contain. These show up at the top of a browser window as well as in search results.

- Keep title tags shorter than 65 characters. Anything above that will be represented by ellipsis.
- Choose any format you like — as long as it's organized. We like to use this format: "Page Title | More Information | Business Name".
- Don't overthink these! Write for readability and accurate description of the page.
- Place keywords towards the front of your title tags and make sure to do your [keyword research](#) before writing! More on this in the **Keyword Research** section below.



Tip #1

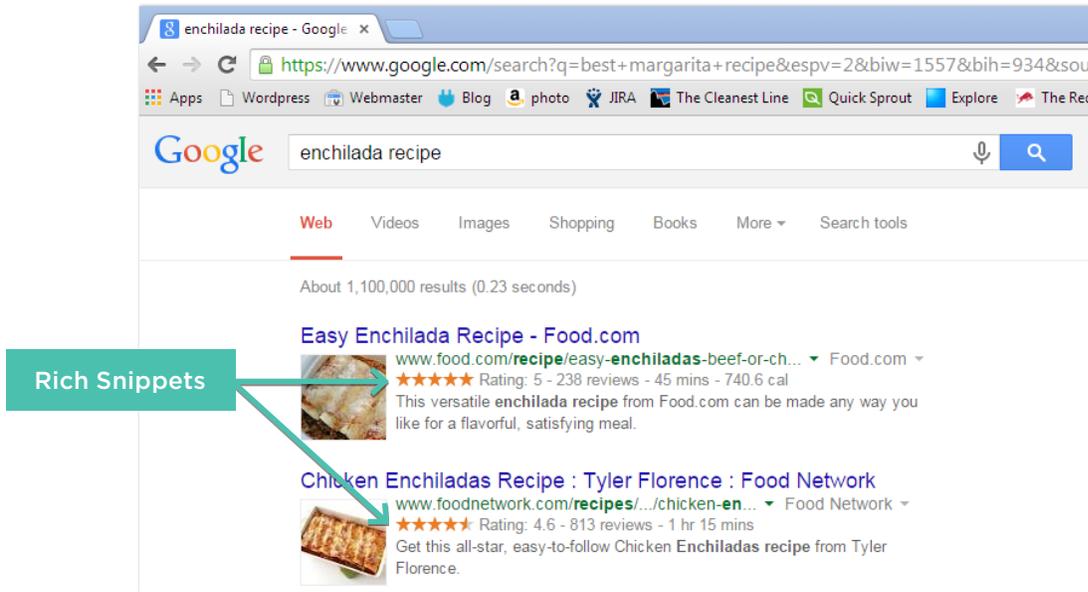
Add your business' physical location to your title tags if you are trying to increase business locally. For example: "Mexican Restaurant Name | Amazing & Authentic Mexican Food | Santa Barbara, CA."

Meta Descriptions

Meta descriptions, also called page descriptions, show up under the title tags on a search engine results page. These short snippets of information help users and spiders better understand the page. The only other place they show up is in the HTML code of your website.

- Most search engines cut off meta descriptions after 160 characters.
- Though search engines do not use meta descriptions for rankings, they are essential in creating stronger click-through rates, a major user-signal, which factors heavily in SEO.
- Clear and engaging meta descriptions attract more visitors to your site.

Rich Snippets



Rich snippets are pieces of information that usually accompany meta descriptions to help users and robots easily see what a page is going to be about. While they may be a little more advanced, rich snippets are super helpful for local businesses looking to maximize their SEO potential. They can make a search listing look much more attractive and can be used for reviews, products, businesses, recipes, events, and music. For more info and to learn how to set up rich snippets on your website, go to [Google's Rich Snippets page](#).

Optimized Website Structure

Creating an optimized website structure will help Google index your site more easily, as well as boost user experience.

Internal Links

Internal links, or links that link to other pages within your website, help search engines find their way around your website. Search engines can't use a search bar like humans to find pages on a website. Internal links create an evolving web of internal links throughout your website as a path for search engine spiders to "crawl" over and catalog.

- Create lots of (quality) content! The more content you have on your website, the more options you have to link to. The more internal links you have on your website, the better.
- But do not create internal links just to create links. They have to be natural, authentic and relative. Remember that user experience is first and foremost! Google will know if you are trying to beat the system.
- Don't try anything extravagant with the anchor text, or the clickable text of the link. Anchor text should be used naturally within the content of the article.



Tip #2

You can also create a sitemap to help Google index your site easier. It's incredibly easy, takes very little time, and is highly effective. Learn more about sitemaps [here](#).

Speed

Though it isn't as important as some of the other factors on this list, Google favors websites that have fast load times. Slow-loading websites typically have higher bounce rates and more exits than faster loading ones. Google has created an amazing tool for checking website speed called [PageSpeed Insights](#). Enter your website's URL and it shows you site speed problems AND how to fix them!

- If you use Wordpress and want to increase your website's speed, we recommend this plugin: [W3 Total Cache](#).
- Optimizing your images "for web" is a great way to reduce file sizes and increase speed. We like [Smush.it](#).
- For more information, check out this [awesome infographic](#) from the good people at KISSmetrics about loading time.

Duplicate Content

Duplicate content is one of the biggest — and most frustrating — problems people face when creating and maintaining a website. Why? Because we often create duplicate content without even knowing it! And when you have multiple pages featuring the same content, Google gets angry at you.

Google severely penalizes websites that feature duplicate content. Page URLs that feature tracking codes or printer-friendly versions of pages are perfect examples of how duplicate content is accidentally created. Luckily, Google helps you find duplicate content in [Webmaster Tools](#) and gives you a few ways to fix it:

- The [Rel="canonical" Tag](#), `<link rel="canonical" href="http://fakewebsite.com/awesome-page"/>`, is a great way to tell search engines that a certain page features duplicate content, or is a copy, and refer Google to the original URL via the link.
- Setting up a [301 redirect](#) is another way to avoid being penalized by Google for having duplicate content. Instead of going to a URL with duplicate content, a 301 redirect automatically sends users to the URL with the original content.
- For more info, visit [Google's page on duplicate content](#).

Content Is King

Bill Gates once said, “Content is where I expect much of the real money will be made on the Internet,” in his visionary article “[Content is King.](#)”

Nearly 20 years later, he couldn’t be more right. Content marketing is a top priority for marketers and providing quality content to savvy website visitors is a must in the saturated marketing world.

Keyword Research

Using keywords that are specific to your business will drive your ranking up considerably. Long gone are the days where you could force keywords onto a page and “fool” the search engines.

Today, [long-tail keywords](#) rule. Researching what users want to read about is critical to increasing website engagement and consequently SEO.

- Use [Google Webmaster Tools](#) to see what search queries visitors are using to get to your site. Then, you can create content around the searched organic keywords.
- Check out [Google Trends](#) to find trending topics to write about.
- We also like [Buzzsumo](#), if you’re looking for popular content to write about.
- [SEMrush](#) is an amazing tool to see your competitor’s keywords and search traffic metrics.



Tip #3

Does your business have a blog? If not, stop reading this guide immediately and go create one: Having a blog is the best way to drive traffic to your website, promote internal linking, and boost your SEO all at the same time.

Quality

Google search engines have become so advanced that they actually read content like humans. As we've reiterated, it's no longer about keyword stuffing; you must provide compelling and useful content written with the reader in mind.

- Create fresh content as much as you can. New content increases internal linking, boosts user engagement, and brings new visitors to your website.
- Write longer posts! Google likes longer pieces of content.
- Don't forget to include your researched keywords! Use keywords organically as you write — don't force them into the page without context.



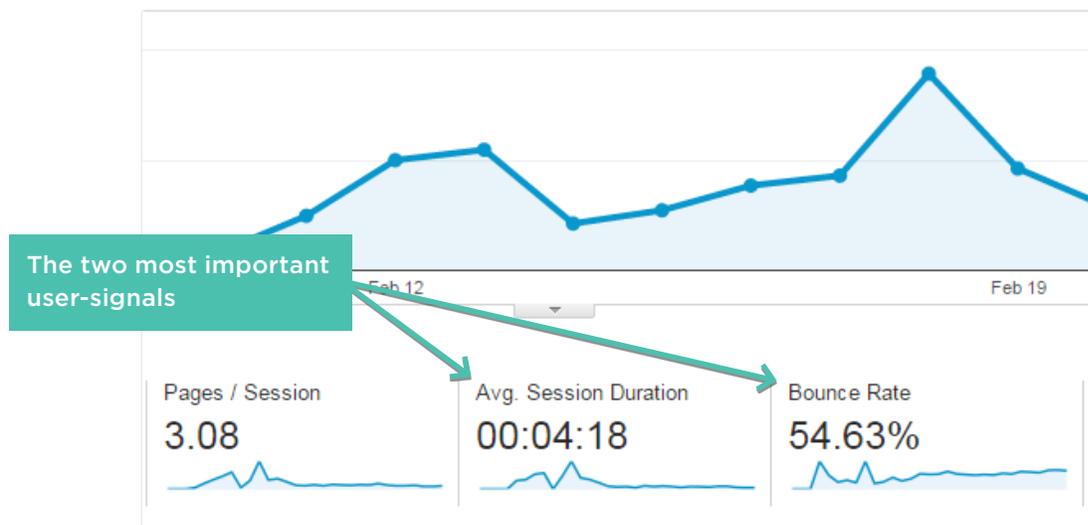
Tip #4

Create a social media strategy to drive traffic to your site and create buzz around your local community! We love Santa Barbara-based, BBQ food truck [Georgia's Smokehouse](#) as an example.

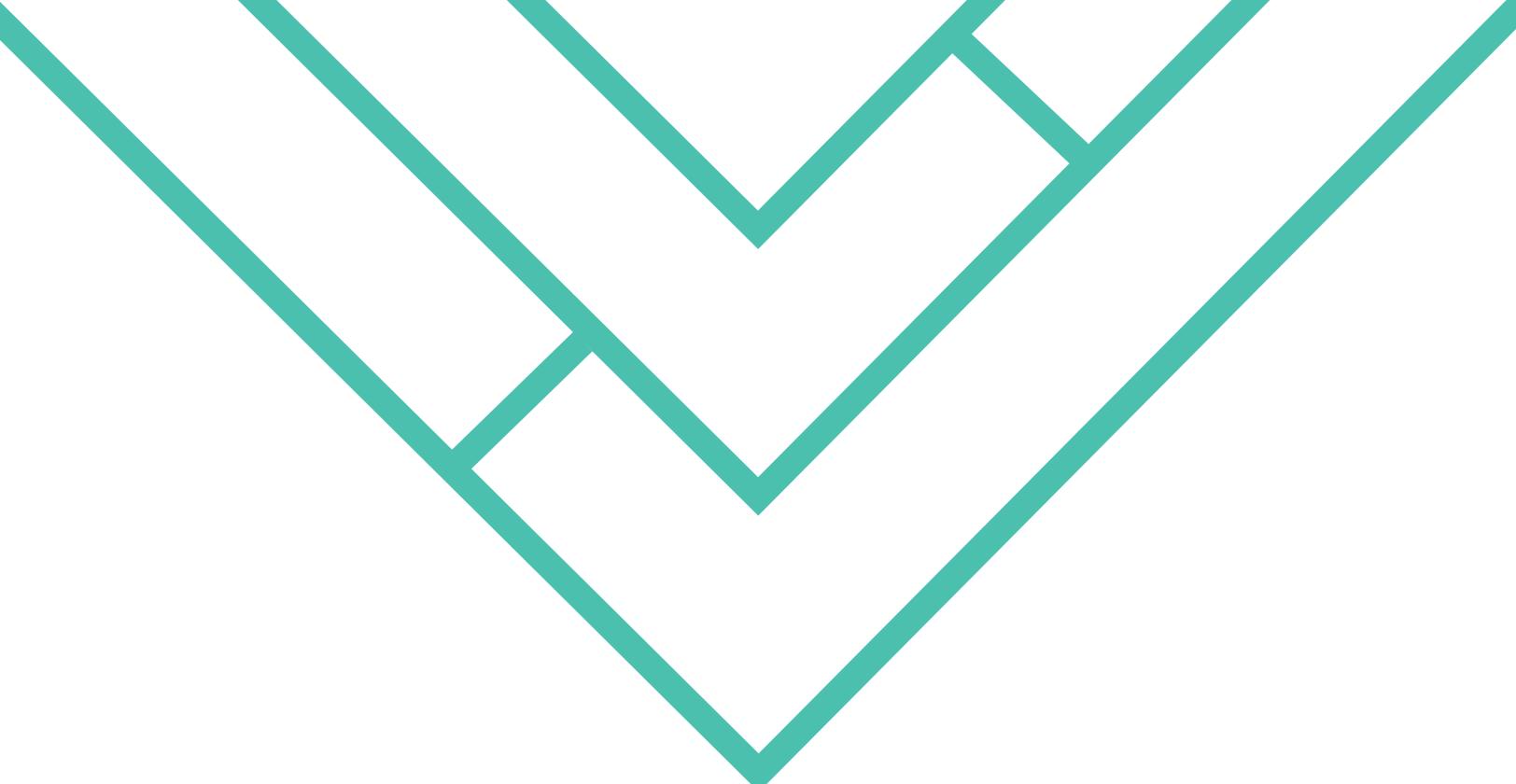
Engagement

Content engagement is one of the biggest user-signals for Google.

Are your visitors interacting with your website, jumping from one internal link to another? Or do they leave shortly after visiting a page? [Low bounce rates](#) and [longer on-site times](#) are metrics that indicate a good user experience. If your users are happy, Google is happy!



- Use [Google Analytics](#) to see which pages are performing and which aren't.
- Test your content! It's a great way to see what your visitors like and to boost engagement. Do your visitors like more complex or more basic information? Is the content on your homepage compelling enough? [Split test your content constantly.](#)
- Create a survey to see what types of content your visitors would like to see. Send it as an email to your contacts or even make it a form on your website. We use [Survey Monkey](#) for reader input. Once you have some input, give the people what they want!



CONCLUSION

Conclusion

Now that you know the basics for better on-site SEO, you can begin putting these steps into action immediately. You don't need to hire an SEO consultant (although that may be an option down the line for you); just begin applying each of these techniques — from increasing your blogging presence to creating internal links to ridding your site of duplicate content!

“**SEO IS A MARATHON, NOT A SPRINT.**”

However, you should know that this is going to take some time; increasing search rankings won't happen overnight. SEO is a marathon — not a sprint. Don't get discouraged; you are making a difference with every SEO technique you utilize.

REMEMBER

- Obey basic SEO guidelines •
- Create quality and authentic content •
- Deliver amazing user experiences •
- Utilize the tools Google has provided •
- Adapt to algorithm updates •

GO FORTH AND OPTIMIZE!

ONTRAPORT

We're a software company that gives entrepreneurs and small businesses the online tools they need to grow their business instead of getting mired in the day-to-day of their business. Since our product launched in 2008, our mission has been to support entrepreneurs in delivering their value to the world by removing the burden of technology. ONTRAPORT is an incredibly powerful all-in-one tool that fully automates your small business.

ONTRAPORT Founder and CEO Landon Ray created ONTRAPORT while running another small business. He wanted to run his business on one platform — and realized there was no such product out there! Landon decided if he couldn't find it, he'd build it. ONTRAPORT was created soon after.

Today, ONTRAPORT supports thousands of entrepreneurs across the world. We've been on Inc.'s 500/5000 list three years running, named twice as one of Forbes' 100 Most Promising Companies, named as the SIIA Software CODIE Award Finalist for Best Relationship Management Solution and Best Marketing Automation Solution, and that's not all.

Landon's dream came true... and yours can, too! Connect with us on Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn or Instagram and tell us what your dream looks like.

PASS IT ON

Don't keep this info to yourself. Share it with your friends and colleagues!

