

# Local SEO 101



So, what is SEO?

Simply put, SEO stands for 'Search Engine Optimization' and it is the process by which businesses gain a first page listing in Google and other popular search engines.

Sounds simple, right? Build a website and they will come, right?

Well, there's a bit more to it than that...

## Where To Begin

If your business has a website, it's a great place to start. If not, no worries; sometimes building a site from scratch is better than trying to rank an existing site, and guess what... websites (business blogs) can usually be built to a high standard in about a week's time and can be indexed in the search engines shortly after going live on the web.

# SEO – The Two-Step Tango

SEO can essentially be broken down into 2 main parts: On-page and Off-page.

On-page SEO is the process of building and optimizing a website so that Google recognizes it as a viable and valuable online resource. Let's face it, Google runs the online world right now, so we want to give them exactly what they want. No sense swimming upstream on this one, because the Big-G makes the rules and they expect everybody to fall in line.

The best way to ensure that Google likes a website is to design it around the visitor. If a visitor comes to a website and then immediately hits the 'back' button, then Google may decide that the site isn't too attractive or user-friendly, especially if it happens frequently. If the visitor sticks around for a while and interacts with the site, then Google will see that as positive reinforcement and take notice.

Google is all about 'user experience,' so we really want to keep that in mind when we build a website and begin to promote it. How do we do that, you ask? Easy...

Simply fill the site with quality, original content that's relevant to your niche or business, interlink the pages with appropriate 'anchor text links,' and then move on to step two... off-page SEO.

Off-page SEO is a bit trickier than the on-page stuff, because it involves going out into the World Wide Web and promoting our website so that people can actually find it and interact with it. You may have the most impressive website in the world, but without any

promotion it will just sit there in a cyber-corner doing nothing but looking pretty!

This process involves keyword selection, backlinking, and social media promotion, yet not necessarily in that order.

The quickest way to gain exposure for a local business site is to set up all the necessary *social media* accounts, and then point them to your site; Facebook fan page, Twitter, Google+, Pinterest, LinkedIn, etc. These are relatively simple to set up, but they can also be rather time consuming if you're still muddling through the learning curves. Once you've done it a few times, it just becomes old hat.

Now we come to the most challenging and misunderstood aspect of SEO and that is *building backlinks*. There have been volumes written about this process, so I won't bore you with a dissertation on the subject. Suffice it to say that Google doesn't stay static for very long, so SEO, and backlinking specifically, is ever evolving and you really need to stay on top of things to remain current and competitive.

The essence of a backlink is this... another site links to your site as a way of paying homage of sorts (It's a popularity contest, really), and then Google takes note of that link and scores your site on their own algorithm system, which of course is always evolving to weed out spammy, garbage links, like... comment links and forum profile links. These tactics worked 5 years ago, but now you can really do damage if you start backlinking a site without actually having an idea about what the heck you're doing!

Example of a good backlink: I have a site about bed bugs... MSNBC discovers my site while researching a piece they're putting together

about the national scourge that are bed bugs. They link back to my site from the article with the anchor text, “why bed bugs are bad,” and now I have one of the most popular and powerful backlinks that money just can’t buy.

Why?

Because... top-notch sites like MSNBC, Forbes, Amazon, Wikipedia, etc. don’t sell links from their site. They also have a VERY HIGH PR (page rank), which is what makes them so powerful in the first place. They are an AUTHORITY. Google will see a link from one of these sites as VERY RELEVANT and they will take note, and then you can essentially write your own ticket as a website owner. It’s pretty tough to get one of these links though, as you can probably imagine.

Fret not, there are ways around this and there are a few people performing quality SEO in the real, online world, and they are helping local businesses and private website owners to gain a foothold in the Google search engine space.

SEO ain’t cheap, but it’s a heck of a lot cheaper than advertising for a dinosaur (Yellow Pages). Once you’ve gained your foothold in the search engines, it’s relatively easy to maintain from month to month, year to year.

Organic, front page rankings on Google may be free, but getting there and maintaining the ranking requires some start-up scratch. Some examples of local business keywords that some businesses may be interested in pursuing may be, but not limited to:

- Sacramento dental care locations
- Bed bug removal in Detroit

- Best rhinoplasty surgeons Atlanta
- Luxury homes for sale in Northern Virginia
- Commercial lighting Dallas
- Pest control services Des Moines
- Las Vegas luxury pools
- San Francisco luxury homes for sale
- Hovercrafts for sale in the USA
- Roof repair Rochester NY
- Water damage Baton Rouge
- Flint Michigan black mold specialists
- Best sports bars in Albuquerque

The sky's literally the limit when it comes to building an online presence for a local business, and hopefully you're seeing the potential that can be gained from this type of exposure. Quite literally, ANY business + town, city, or state has the ability to rank in the search engines for their desired keywords. More and more people are searching online for goods and services, so why not take advantage of that and score your own piece of the proverbial pie?

If you're interested in learning more on the subject, then check out our website or simply drop us a line at the email address listed below. Heck, even our SEO site is a work in progress, and we still interact with all our customers on an individual, one-on-one basis.

I hope that helps and I look forward to hearing from you,

-Curt Bizovi

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