SEO
Secrets

MEDIA
queens

Table of Contents

Why SEO Matters More Than Ever

If you want to get traffic to your website, it's essential to understand Search Engine Optimization (SEO).

Here's why…

Between 2010 to 2015, you could get enormous amounts of traffic from social media. If you created a blog post with an

interesting title and an eye-grabbing picture, you could bet that a lot of people would click on it when they saw it on Facebook.

Websites like Buzzfeed took advantage of this by creating endless listicles (like "22 Reasons Seinfeld Is The Best Show Ever"). Loads of people would see these articles, click on them, and then share them with their friends.

Since then, however, things have changed dramatically. Facebook (and other social media platforms) realized that they were basically giving free publicity to businesses. If businesses want to get people's attention, shouldn't they have to pay for it?

So, Facebook started making it much more difficult for businesses to grab people's attention. Whereas before, 10,000 people might see a post shared by a business, now only 1,000 people would see it (those aren't the actual numbers, but you get the point). If a business wanted to get a lot of exposure, they would have to pay for it.

The end result of all this is that it's now super tough to get as much traffic from social media.

You either need to have a massive following or be willing to shell out a fair amount of cash.

This is why SEO matters so much. SEO is the process of optimizing your website (pages, blog posts, and more) for search engines like Google. If you understand it and do it right, you can get a significant amount of traffic from search engines.

In other words, when people use Google to search for specific terms, your site will show up near the top of the results. People will click on your site and read your awesome content.

Pretty simple, right?

Well, sort of. The general concept behind SEO is simple but it's a little more complicated in practice. Which makes sense, of course. There are trillions of web pages out there and Google has to be able to understand them and give the relevant ones to searchers.

One of the primary goals of SEO is to make your website stand out from everything else. You want to make your site as appealing as possible to Google. The more appealing it is,

the more it will be shown to searchers and the more traffic you'll get.

So, how do you make your site stand out in the eyes of Google? That's what this eBook is all about.

You'll find practical, proven SEO strategies that will increase your Google rankings.

Ready?

Let's dive in.

How Does Google Work?

To understand SEO, it's important to have an understanding of how Google works. The search engine is incredibly complex, and Google is notoriously secretive about exactly how it works, but over the years they've revealed a fair amount of key information.

At the core, Google exists to return relevant information to searchers. That's why we all use

it, right? We trust that, most of the time, it will return information relevant to our searches. If it didn't reliably do this, no one would use it. If you search for "dog food" and Google returns pages with fish tanks, that information is useless to you.

In order to make users happy, Google is always trying to find the best, most relevant information for a given search. But how does it determine which web pages are the best and most relevant?

Ranking Factors

The Google algorithm uses over 200 different factors when evaluating pages. These factors help Google determine which pages to return in search results. You enter a search term and Google evaluates millions of pages by their ranking factors to find the results that best match your search.

In simple terms, pages with higher "scores" are listed higher in search results than pages with lower "scores". The better a page is according

to all the different ranking factors, the higher it appears in the search results.

As you would expect, not all the ranking factors are equal. Some are much more important than others. So which ones matter the most? Google hasn't made it 100% clear which ones are the most important, but there seems to be a fair amount of agreement around a few:

- Search intent
- Backlinks
- Page speed
- User experience
- Content freshness, depth, and accuracy
- Site authority
- Security
- Mobile friendliness
- Structured data
- Optimized for voice search

We'll go into much greater detail about each of these factors as we get further into this eBook. To go into much more detail about all the different ranking factors, check out Brian Dean's post Google's 200 Ranking Factors.

If you want to succeed with SEO, focus on the factors listed above. In the pages that follow, we're going to explore each of the factors and what they mean for your website in particular.

By the end, you'll have a much greater sense of how SEO works, along with specific action steps you can take to increase the amount of search traffic your website receives.

SEO Factor #1: Search Intent

One of the most important Google ranking factors is search intent. Behind every search there is intent. In other words, when you type a search into Google, you're looking for something specific. You want to know how to make a certain recipe, the height of the Eiffel tower, or the most recent soccer scores.

Google always seeks to return results that most closely match what you're looking for. Pages that closely match the search intent will rank much higher than those that don't.

If you want to get search traffic to your website, you must optimize your pages for search intent. In other words, you want them to contain the information that people are searching for.

For example, say you maintain a home DIY site and on it you have a step-by-step tutorial for installing a light switch. If you want that page to show up in searches, the information on it should match what people are searching for.

So, how do you optimize your pages for search intent?

Keyword Research

Keyword research is the process of finding relevant keywords and phrases that have a high monthly search volume and then including those words and phrases throughout a page. When you include relevant keywords in your

content, it helps Google understand the content more effectively.

There are a number of tools that can help you find relevant, high-volume keywords and phrases:

- [Ubersuggest](#)
- [Ahrefs](#)
- [SEMRush](#)
- [Long Tail Pro](#)

We're going to use Ubersuggest since it has a number of free features available, but the other tools work well too.

There are several relatively simple ways you can find the best keywords for your page.

First, you can directly enter words and phrases to see what the monthly search volume is. If you enter the phrase "best gaming laptop" into Ubersuggest, you get the following results:

	KEYWORD		VOL	CPC	PD	SD
☐	best gaming laptop	↪	49,500	$1.09	100	58
☐	best for gaming laptop	↪	49,500	$1.82	100	50
☐	the best gaming laptop	↪	49,500	$1.82	100	50
☐	best gaming laptop 2019	↪	12,100	$2.11	100	39
☐	best gaming laptop under 1000	↪	6,600	$0.83	100	37
☐	best gaming laptop budget	↪	6,600	$1.70	100	36

You see the keyword, monthly volume, cost per click (for advertising), competition for paid advertising, and competition for standard SEO. The higher the SEO competition, the more difficult it is to get on the first page of the search results. Generally speaking, keywords with very high search volumes are really tough to rank for.

Your goal is to find keywords that have a relatively high search volume and relatively low levels of competition.

Notice that you're also given a list of related keywords along with your primary keyword.

You'll want to include a few of these in your content along with your primary keyword.

Another way to find relevant keywords is to look at your competitors to see what terms they are already ranking for.

If you look at the website Drink Trade (www.drinktrade.com), you can see the top keywords that they rank for.

KEYWORDS		VOL	POSITION	EST. VISITS	SD
french press coffee	↪	49,500	1	15,048	58
chemex	↪	40,500	4	2,669	74
pour over coffee	↪	33,100	6	1,119	53
how to use a french press	↪	33,100	11	70	19
intelligentsia	↪	27,100	9	406	43
how to make coffee	↪	22,200	1	6,749	25

Seeing the terms your competitors rank for can help you determine the keywords you want to go after. Again, look for relatively high-volume, low-competition keywords.

Optimizing Your Content

Once you've identified a number of relevant keywords and phrases, sprinkle them appropriately and naturally throughout your page.

It's important that you don't try to cram in as many keywords as possible. This practice, known as keyword stuffing, is frowned on by Google and will hurt your page.

Try to include your primary keyword:

- In the page title
- Within the first 100 words
- In a subheading
- Naturally sprinkled throughout the body

Remember, Google is smart. You don't need to go overboard on your keywords. Use them enough so that it's clear what your page is about without cluttering up the page. It's important that your page be easy to read and understand.

SEO Factor #2: Backlinks

Backlinks are another important search ranking factor. When a website links to your website, that is a backlink. Generally speaking, the more backlinks a page has, the more authoritative and trustworthy it is. Authoritative pages are shown higher in search results.

It may help to think in terms of votes. When website A links to website B, it's a sign that the

people who run website A think the content of website B is really good. It's a vote of confidence, of sorts. More links from other sites equals more votes of confidence.

When Google sees that a page has a lot of backlinks, it's a signal to them that a lot of people value the page and that the content on it is good. Pages with lots of backlinks tend to show up much higher in search results because they are more authoritative and trustworthy in the eyes of Google.

One caveat to this is that the backlinks need to come from relevant sites. If you run a site about jogging and you get a backlink from a site about exercise, that's a relevant link. The contents of both sites are related.

If you get a backlink from a site about fish tanks, that's not a relevant link and won't carry much value in Google's eyes. Google might even think the link is spammy, which could hurt the rankings of your pages.

The implication of all this is that if you want your pages to rank in search results, it's

important to get relevant backlinks to those pages.

So how do you do that?

Create Great Content

The starting place for getting backlinks is creating outstanding content on your website. There are literally millions of new pages published on the internet each day. If you want people to link to your pages, it's important to give them a good reason. Create valuable content that people actually want to link to.

What makes content valuable?

Great content always checks at least one of the following boxes:

- It covers a subject more thoroughly than other pieces.
- It's authoritative (facts, studies).
- It's easy to consume (easy to read, well-designed).
- It's up to date.

For example, if you run a fitness website, are you more likely to link to a 500-word listicle or a 5,000-word, super in-depth piece written by an exercise expert? Definitely the latter. It's so much more valuable to your audience than the 500-word puff piece.

If you want to get backlinks, take a look at what is currently ranking in the search results for a specific keyword. How can you outdo those pages? What steps can you take to create superior content? If you're not willing to put in the work to create high-value material, you'll struggle to get backlinks.

Promote Your Content

At its core, link building is all about finding strategic ways to promote your content. After all, if you want people to link to your content, they need to see it first.

There are many effective ways to do promotion, such as:

1. Outreach. Find websites in the same niche as yours. Connect with the owners of the sites and ask if they would be willing to link to your content. You have to be careful to do this in a non-spammy way. Use this [Email Outreach Guide](#) when reaching out to other websites.

2. Guest post. Find relevant sites that allow guest posts. In your post, include one link back to your own site. Be sure to carefully follow any provided instructions.

3. Appear on podcasts. Find relevant podcasts that welcome guests. You will probably get a backlink in the show notes.

4. Find broken links. Use an SEO tool like Ahrefs to find links on relevant websites that don't work anymore. Email the site owner and offer your own content as a replacement for the broken link. Check out

this [Broken Link Building Guide](#) for more details.

5. Find resource pages. Many websites put together large lists of links to helpful resources. Find relevant resource pages and ask if your content might be added to the page.

There are numerous other link building methods, some more effective than others. Ultimately, they almost all boil down to the same thing: adding value to other people.

The more value you can add, whether by creating great content, guest posting, or finding broken links, the more likely others are to link back to your site. If you provide lots of value, the backlinks will come in.

SEO Factor #3: Page Speed

Page speed is how fast a page loads in the browser. Fast pages can be viewed almost immediately while slow pages take longer to appear. These days, page speed increasingly matters to Google.

Think about it from their perspective. If they send searchers to a page that takes a long time to load, those searchers won't be happy.

People want to see results quickly, and if a page is slow, they'll click to another page.

In light of this, they tend to favor faster pages over slower ones in the search results. All other things being equal, faster pages get higher rankings.

To get a sense of how your site performs in the speed category, use the free Google tool [Test My Site](). It will analyze your site, tell you how it is performing, and give you specific recommendations for speeding up your website.
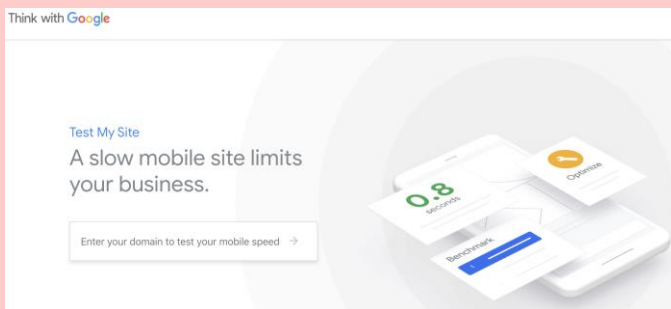
In addition to the suggestions made by Test My Site, there are a number of relatively simple things you can do to speed up your web pages. If you don't feel comfortable doing these things

yourself, ask your webmaster if they can help you do them.

Compress Images

Large images on web pages dramatically increase the time it takes them to load. A very simple way to increase your page speed is to automatically compress all your images. If you use WordPress, the [WP Smush Image plugin](#) will handle all the compression duties for you.

Once you install it, the plugin will analyze all the pictures in your media library and find ones that it can compress. You can also bulk upload photos and WP Smush will compress them all.

If you use something other than WordPress, you can easily compress your images using a service like [TinyPNG](#) or [TinyJPG](#). Both of these tools can handle your compression needs.

Implement Browser Caching

When a person visits your site, all the elements of your website, such as images and HTML

code, need to be loaded into their browser. This process requires a lot of resources and slows down the loading process.

Browser caching saves certain elements of your site, like headers and footers, within visitors 'browsers so that they don't have to reload every time they visit your site. This can increase your site speed quite a bit.

The [W3 Total Cache](#) WordPress plugin makes it super simple to implement browser caching on your site.

Minify HTML

When a person visits your site, the HTML code must be loaded into and interpreted by their browser. Decreasing the amount of HTML that must be loaded increases page speed. Minification decreases the HTML by cleaning it up: removing unnecessary lines, erasing duplicate information, and more.

You don't have to be a whiz at coding to minify the HTML on your site. The [Minify HTML WordPress plugin](#) will take care of it for you. Once you've installed the plugin, go to the settings and turn it on. Your page speed will increase once you've done this.

Remove Unnecessary Plugins and Scripts

Plugins and scripts are a great way to improve the functionality of your website. Unfortunately, they can also reduce its overall performance. Each time your site loads, the plugins and scripts also must load.

A simple way to speed up your website is to remove any unnecessary plugins and scripts.

Use A Content Delivery Network (CDN)

A Content Delivery Network (CDN) puts the files to your website on a large number of servers around the world (as opposed to servers in a central location). When a person visits your site, they are getting the files from a server that is relatively close to them.

The physical proximity of the servers increases the speed at which your pages load.

Examples of CDNs include:

- Cloudflare
- MaxCDN
- Cloudwatch

SEO Factor #4:
User Experience (UX)

In recent years, Google has started using a machine learning algorithm called RankBrain to determine whether users are satisfied with search results. Pages that show high user satisfaction are ranked higher in the search results.

RankBrain looks at User Experience Signals to determine whether a particular page is

satisfying users. Basically, it looks at how people interact with a page and then rates the page based on those interactions.

If Google sees people interacting with your site in a positive way, your pages will rank higher in the search results and you'll get more search traffic.

How does Google know if people are having a positive experience with your site? It looks at a number of different things, including Click-Through Rate (CTR) and Dwell Time.

Click Through Rate (CTR)

Click through rate (CTR) is the percentage of people who see your site in the search results and actually click through to your site. If 100 people see your site and 3 click through, your CTR is 3%. If a page has a high CTR, it's a signal to Google that the page is important and should be high in the search results.

Every Google search listing has three elements: page title, page description, and page URL.

If you want to increase your CTR, it's important to optimize all three elements for maximum clicks:

1. Start by optimizing your page title. It should be attention grabbing so that it stands out in the search results. If your page title is bland or boring, people won't click on it. Your title should make it clear that the page definitely contains the information people are looking for and that it's worth clicking on.

   - If you struggle to come up with good titles, use CoSchedule's Headline Analyzer. It will examine your proposed title and make suggestions for how it can be improved.

2. Next, optimize your page description, which is the text that shows up under the title. Like your title, it needs to be both clear and compelling. Include your primary keyword in the description so that searchers know the page contains the information they need.

3. Third, optimize the URL of your page. The best way to do this is to make the URL short and include the primary keyword in it. Something like this: www.example.com/primary-keyword. Avoid using long keywords with lots of random characters. Keep them short and sweet.

Dwell Time

Dwell time is how long someone stays on your site after clicking on the search result. If they stay for a long time, it's a sign to Google that the content on the page is valuable and should be placed higher in the search results. Higher dwell time equals higher rankings.

The primary way to increase dwell time is to create outstanding content that people really want to consume. Light, fluffy content won't cut it. It's important to give people deep

content that pulls them in from the start and keeps them interested until the end.

There are also are a few other things you can do to increase the dwell time on your pages:

1. Quick, snappy intros. Most intros take way too long to get to the point. When someone visits a page, they want to know right away whether it can help them. Keep your intros quick, clear, and to the point. Tell people what they're going to learn and then move on to the rest.

2. Long form content. Longer, more in-depth content tends to perform better than short content. Long content provides much fuller answers than short content, which leads people to stay on the page longer, which increases overall dwell time.

3. Easy to read. If you're going to create longform content, it has to be easy to read. Large blocks of text are overwhelming and will turn people off. Use plenty of subheadings, paragraph breaks, bullet points, and more to break up the text.

4. **Embed videos.** Embedded videos can be a helpful supplement to text on your pages. An additional benefit is that they keep people on your pages longer, which boosts your dwell time.

5. **Internal links.** Linking to other, highly relevant pages on your website causes people to explore your site more, which increases the overall dwell time on your website.

SEO Factor #5: Content Freshness, Accuracy & Depth

All content is not created equal, and Google cares very much about giving searchers the right content. To ensure they deliver the best results, they look at several different things.

Content Freshness

If a search is time-sensitive, it's important that it be fresh and updated. For example, if someone searches for "current NFL standings", they want the most recent information. They don't want NFL standings from six months ago.

If the information on one of your pages changes somewhat regularly, it's important to do your best to keep it up to date. If you don't, it won't perform well in searches.

A longform guide about John F. Kennedy probably doesn't need to be updated regularly since the information stays relatively static. A guide to the best gaming laptops probably should be updated somewhat regularly since new laptops are being released all the time.

As a general rule, try to update your content whenever there are significant updates to the information itself.

Content Accuracy

Google does their best to ensure that the information they show in search results is accurate. They do this in several different ways. They compare information against something called the "knowledge graph", which is a huge information repository containing data on all kinds of things.

There's also some evidence that Google relies on a number of trusted resources on the internet to verify information.

The reasons for this insistence on accuracy are obvious. If Google regularly returned incorrect search results, you wouldn't want to use it. What's more, if people act based upon incorrect information (like medicine dosage), the results could be disastrous.

Work hard to fact-check the content you publish. Check verified, trust sources if you're in doubt about something.

Content Depth

The more thoroughly you cover a subject, the greater the odds of ranking in top search

results. Now, to be clear, thoroughness is different than length.

Covering a subject in-depth means that you provide all the information that searchers are looking for.

If you don't cover a subject thoroughly, people will come to your site, not find what they're looking for, and then bounce to another site. Your dwell time will be low, which Google will take to mean that your content isn't relevant, and your rankings will fall.

As you create content, think through all the different things people might be searching for related to the content you're creating. The more you cover, the more relevant your content will be to searchers.

If you're not sure what people are searching for, type your primary keyword into Google, scroll to the bottom, and look at the related searches. This will give you a sense of topics related to your primary keyword.

SEO Factor #6:
Site Authority

Some websites carry more authority than others. When it comes to medical issues, the Mayo Clinic's website is much more authoritative than some random person's blog. Major news outlets carry more weight than websites run by a single person.

When it comes to search results, Google tends to favor high authority websites. In Google's

mind, these sites are the most trustworthy sources of information.

What makes a site authoritative? While Google doesn't have a specific list of things, there seem to be a few commonly agreed upon things.

The first key to authority is backlinks. Sites with a lot of backlinks from a variety of sources are considered to have more authority than sites with a limited number of backlinks. We've already talked about backlinks quite a bit, so we won't go into it any further here.

Another key to authority is topical expertise. Google knows that no one can be an expert in everything. They prefer sites that focus on being an authority in one particular area.

In their SEO Starter Kit, they say:

> *A site with a good reputation is trustworthy. Cultivate a reputation for expertise and trustworthiness in a specific area...Expertise and authoritativeness of a site increases its quality. Be sure that content on your site*

is created or edited by people with expertise in the topic. For example, providing expert or experienced sources can help users understand articles ' expertise. Representing well-established consensus in pages on scientific topics is a good practice if such consensus exists.

If you want your pages to rank in the search results, focus on developing and demonstrating your expertise in a particular area. Avoid trying to cover too many different subjects. Focus on developing the best content in your niche.

For example, instead of focusing on the incredibly broad subject of technology, focus on one element of tech, like smartphones.

Building the authority of a website is all about momentum. The more extremely authoritative content you create, the more backlinks you'll attract. More backlinks result in your site being more authoritative. Once you get things rolling, it becomes easier to establish your authority.

SEO Factor #7: Security and Mobile Friendliness

Two more ranking factors that you may have already implemented are security and mobile friendliness. If these things aren't in place on your site, it's going to be really tough for you to rank highly.

Security

Google takes the security of its users seriously. They don't want to send people to an unsecured site where data could be breached.

If you use the Chrome browser, you may have gotten a "Not Secure" warning when trying to visit specific pages. This warning is shown on sites where the data between the browser and server is not encrypted.

How do you know if your site is secure?

A simple way is to look in the URL bar where your web address is typed. Depending on the browser you use, you should either see "https" before the web address or a security icon (it's a padlock in the Chrome browser).

If your site isn't secure, make it secure using an SSL certificate.

Let's Encrypt is a free SSL certificate which you can install on your site. If you don't know how to install one of these, your webmaster should be able to help you. Additionally, many web hosts can install one automatically for you.

Mobile Friendliness

In addition to being secure, your site also needs to be mobile friendly, meaning that it looks good on a smartphone. Sites and pages that aren't mobile friendly won't perform well in search results.

One way to see how your site performs on mobile phones is to go to Google Search Console and look at the "Mobile Usability" report. There you'll see if there are any mobile issues with your site.
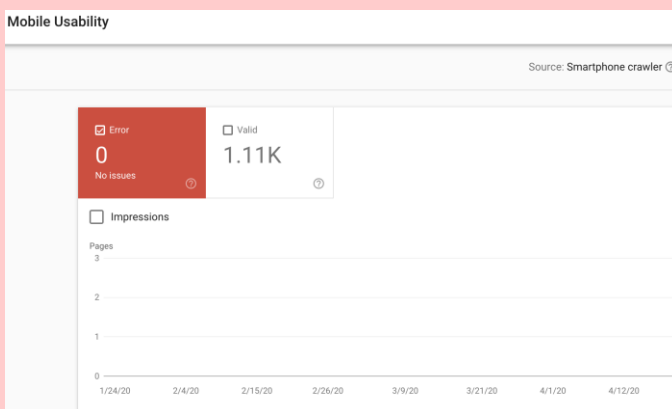
Given that a huge amount of online searches happens on mobile phones, it's very important for your site to be optimized for them.

SEO Factor #8:
Use Structured Data

Many web pages have text on them that is easy for people to understand but tough for the Google algorithm to make sense of. For example, you may have a product page that features things like prices, availability, ratings, and more. Google can't easily understand that information unless you structure it in a specific way.

Structured data is specific code you put on your pages that helps Google understand the content. There are specific structured data formats for all sorts of things, including:

- Books
- Movies
- Courses
- Ratings
- Events
- Local business info
- Recipes
- And much more

If you implement structured data correctly, it may show directly in the search results. For example, have you ever searched for a recipe and seen things like bake time or ratings? That's the result of structured data being implemented.

When information is shown directly in the results, it's called a "rich snippet". Rich snippets increase the chances that a person will click on your website in the search results.

To create this type of information, you can use Google's [Structured Data Markup Helper](#). You enter the URL of the page you want to edit and then Google will guide you through adding structured data to it. Once you're done, you can simply copy and paste the updated information back to your website.

SEO Factor #9: Optimize for Voice Search

Since the introduction of voice assistants like Siri, Alexa, and Google Home, voice search has exploded. Instead of typing in their searches, people can just speak them.

In order to optimize for voice search, it's important to think about how most people use it. It's almost always done in the form of a question:

- How old is Paul Newman?
- What time is the movie playing?
- Is ice water good for dogs?
- When did the Beatles break up?

The best way to optimize for voice search is to include content that can be pulled by Google and given as the answer to a question.

Some relatively simple ways to do that are:

1. Create FAQ pages. These pages are usually short and sweet answers to a number of specific questions, which is exactly what Google is looking for when returning voice search results.

2. Shoot for the featured snippet. The featured snippet often shows up before any other search results and is often given as answers to voice searches. For strategies on how to get the featured snippet, check out this guide by HubSpot.

3. Write naturally. Google wants voice search results to sound natural, so they tend to favor content that is written naturally. In other words, write like you talk. Avoid being stiff and formal.

4. Keep it simple. [On average](#), voice search results tend to be at around a 9th grade reading level. This is one reason why you don't want to use overly technical jargon or complex words.

5. Boost your site speed. Google wants to deliver voice search results fast, which means they favor faster websites. The faster your site, the better the chances of you ranking for voice searches.

As you work to make your site voice-search-friendly, think about the kind of information you would want to know and the questions you would ask to find that information. Then work that information naturally into the content that you're creating.

Playing the Long Game

SEO is a long game that you don't win overnight. It takes time to create great content that is optimized for search intent and user experience. Getting backlinks to your site takes consistent, concerted effort.

But the effort is worth it. SEO is one of the most effective ways to get consistent traffic to your website.

We've discussed a number of different SEO techniques you can begin implementing right away:

- Optimize for search intent
- Get backlinks
- Improve your page speed
- Create a good user experience
- Create content that is fresh, accurate, and in-depth
- Build the authority of your site
- Ensure that your site is secure and mobile friendly
- Use structured data
- Optimize for voice search

At its core, SEO isn't that complicated. Your goal is to give people what they want: trustworthy, authoritative content that is relevant to their search. You want to give them this content in the best possible format: a website that is secure, mobile friendly, fast, and easy to digest.

When you focus on giving people what they want in the best possible format, other things, like getting backlinks, become much easier.

So, start playing the long SEO game today. You probably won't see an immediate change, but if you keep at it, you will see results.

Stay inspired. Never stop creating.