SEO SETUP

Transcript
LESSON 1:
KEY SEO CONCEPTS
**Introduction to SEO**

So, first off, let’s start with a definition. There are numerous definitions but I find this to be the simplest. So, “SEO or Search Engine Optimization, refers to all techniques used to increase rankings in organic search results.” First off in this section, we’re going to learn exactly what are search engine results, the organic search engine results. And later in the course we’ll go into more detail about these specific areas and techniques you need to carry out to improve your website’s rankings and search results. In this slide we’re looking at what’s called the acquisition report that sits within Google Analytics. And this report breaks down all the traffic that’s coming through to your site segmented by channel so you can see the traffic that’s coming through organic, paid search, direct, referral, social, etc. In this case, we can see that organic traffic accounts for 42.3%, almost half of overall site traffic to this particular website. This is typically the case across all industry verticals and really demonstrates the importance of organic rankings and organic traffic in overall SEO.

To further demonstrate the importance of organic traffic, I’m going to go through a study here that was carried out by site called Advanced Web Ranking. So, they analyzed click-through rates for searches coming from 1.5 million keywords across 49,000 websites and the results were really interesting. You can see the significance of appearing high up on page one and the impact it has on click-through rates and the amount of traffic coming through to the site. So, obviously, the higher an ad rank you have, the higher percentage of traffic that’s going to come through to your site and the better your click-through rates are going to be. As you can see from the graph here, the variances are really significant so there’s a drop in 30% for the site that appears in position one right down to 1.3% for the site that appears in position 10. So, clearly small minor changes in ranking are going to have a huge impact to the amount of traffic coming through to your site. As well as delivering site traffic, a strong organic ranking has the benefit of improving brand awareness and brand acceptance and trust.

In this slide, we see an example of a search result for someone who’s looking to engage in Safari Tour. Obviously, it’s high-involvement purchase so they want to book with a very reputable company. In the search results here, we can see the same company is occupying the top two organic positions which would lead you to believe that they’re a trustworthy and reputable company and you’re more likely to book with them than you would be for a company that might be on page five, for example. Organic search along with page search are often the top-performing channels in terms of sales, return on investment and other website engagements. In terms of the search engine's results pages themselves, they’re constantly evolving. Typically, you will have the ads appearing on top of the page, and the organic listings appearing beneath them. Previously, there were three ads at the top of the search results page and the remaining ads, and there were seven ads along the right-hand side. But in a move from this Google removed all right-hand side ads and now there are only four ads appearing at the top of the page where there would be ten organic listings displayed on each results page.

So, let’s go through some of the main differences between SEO and PPC, starting first with SEO. SEO or clicks from organic links can be considered free traffic. There’s no cost-per-click so the cost of an SEO project is down to the hourly basis determined by the practitioner. SEO’s considered a long-term investment. All the implementations you make, the optimizations you make, they’re going to take a bit of time to take effect. You’re not going to see an immediate result. Once you engage in an SEO project, you need to, you know, continue to carry your best practices and over time you’ll start to develop positive results and see positive trends. If you stop carrying out SEO then your organic rankings will stagnate and over time you’ll expect them to drop and disimprove. The other thing to consider about SEO is that it’s not a great method for pages that are changing a lot.
So, really you should focus on the core pages of your site. The pages that are… pages like home pages or the direct links from the site where you can add a lot of value and these are the pages that you’re hoping are going to drive the majority of traffic through to your website in any case. So, then looking at paid search or PPC, this is costed on a pay-per-click basis. So, every time your ad is clicked on, you incur a cost. It’s a short-term investment and you see immediate results. So, as soon as you engage in paid search campaign, you’ll see your traffic increase. If you stop a campaign, that traffic will stop and the traffic coming through to your site from that channel is going to stop altogether.

The other great thing about paid search is it’s particularly useful for time-sensitive or seasonal campaigns. So, for example, using like shopping-type ads related to Christmas is going to yield a really high level of results where that might disimprove in other months of the year you’re going to see a lower level of results.

**How Search Engines Are Used**

As we all know from carrying out web research ourselves, a user will type words or queries into a search engine. These we typically call keywords. And keywords can come in many forms. They can be navigational, informational or transactional. And some examples of these would be navigational is when you’re looking to find a specific page or website. So, if your search term is Delta Airlines, you’re looking for the Delta website specifically. Informational is if you’re looking to answer a query you may have. For example, what is the population of Canada? Transactional finally, is where you’re looking to buy or acquire a product or service. For example, “buy Gucci shoes online.”

Keywords typically come in two formats. You can have short tail or long tail keywords. Short tail keywords are typically higher in search volume. Long tail keywords, however, give you a greater insight into what the user is searching for because typically they contain more keywords. As a result, you can optimize your landing pages easier based on the amount of keywords that are in the user’s search query. Using examples, a short-tail keyword would be a search for ‘mortgages’. It’s very broad, very general, it’s going to be difficult for you to optimize really specific information based on a keyword such as mortgages. A long tail keyword would be mortgage rate comparison Germany. In this instance, you have more keywords describing what the user is looking for. You have a location so you know that this user is looking to compare mortgage rates and they’re based in Germany. As a result, you can build out page content to be more specific and more relevant for that user.

**How Search Engines Work**

So, how do search engines actually work? Obviously, there are so many websites and so much content on the internet that search engines need to use a system through which they can search, comb through different websites and discover and understand the content on them. This is achieved using automated software on spiders, crawlers or bots. These terms you’ll see mentioned and they can be quite interchangeable and to a wide extent they do a similar job. But they do have marginally different functions. Spiders, for example, is a program run by the search engine to build a summary of the website’s content. The crawler is something that visits each page of a website and determines all of the hyperlinks on every individual page. Whereas robots is an automated computer program that visits web sites and performs predefined tasks.

So, what system do search engines use to read and understand all of this web content? The basic system is through three steps. Crawling, indexing and ranking. So firstly, crawling is when the search engine spiders or crawlers will browse through all available website content. Next, it’ll be indexed whereby it’s filed, processed and finally, it’s ranked. So, based on the user’s search query, the search
engines will display the web page they deem to be the most relevant. During the indexing stage, a search engine will use an algorithm to help them process and understand web information more easily. The algorithm also helps evaluate each individual piece of web content and to rank it accordingly. The algorithm operates within a set of rules and it's a unique formula and will use this formula to determine the significance of each individual web page.

Part of Google’s algorithm is called RankBrain. So, obviously with billions of pages across the websites, it’s important they have a system to comb through all these pages and index ones they deem most relevant. So, RankBrain is operated on a machine learning basis which means that it learns through an artificial intelligence system rather than following an algorithm or through human learnings. And as I said, it’s just one component of the overall algorithm.

So, all of our SEO efforts are going to be focused on rank. Your rank is where your website is going to appear within 1 to 10 on the organic search results as we looked at previously. And the better the rank you’re going to have, the more organic traffic you’re going to drive through to your site. A couple of other important components to consider are page authority and domain authority. Page authority is the individual strength of pages throughout your website and these will all combine to form an overall domain authority which will show the strength of your overall website.

SERPs

So what are the areas you need to focus on to develop strong rankings? They're broken down into on-page optimization, technical SEO, and off-page optimization. Through the next few sections, we're going to go through the different components that are involved in each of these areas and also we're going to touch on some best practices.

Another important area to be aware of within organic search results are site links. Site links appear below the main organic result and appear as sub links or additional links through your organic listing. Typically, these site links will be linking to more deep link pages and popular pages and the goal of it is really to provide a better user experience. So, if a user visits a home page, if they want to go straight through to a deeper link page that’s more closely linked to that query or what they’re trying to achieve, they can click on a site link and again, that will boost that site link’s performance. You cannot select your individual site links. However, you can use Google Search Console to demote individual site links if you don’t want certain links or pages to appear.

Another area to be aware of is rich snippets. Especially when the results pages are constantly evolving and changing over time, and something they are testing, for example, are rich snippets. So, a rich snippet is a term used to describe from the search engine displays a bit of information about the actual result within the search engine. So, it may take the form of a review or an image. We’ll touch on this in more detail later in the course. Another such feature is knowledge panels. This is when you’re carrying out a result that has a very specific answer. So, the example here being, “What is the population of Canada?” Google in this instance will display the answer within the search engine results page so you don’t have to leave the results page at all.
LESSON 2: SETTING OBJECTIVES FOR SEO
Business Objectives

Before beginning an SEO project, it is important to consider the company’s business objectives and how your website plays into this. It is important from the outset to be able to describe your business offering in simple terms. A website can have a number of roles. It can be used to inform, to entertain, to persuade and to sell products and services. And depending on what the function of your website is, different goals or metrics will be used to measure the success of these. So, for example, if your website is used to inform, you're going to be looking at engagement in terms of time spent on site or the amount of pages visited. If the purpose of your website is to entertain, then engagement and direction could be a priority. If your website is aimed at persuading, then form fills or form completes are going to be important. And finally, if it's to sell products or services, obviously getting a user through a checkout system and through to a sale is going to be critically important.

Also, important to consider is the profile of your end user. You want to know as much as possible about your ideal customer and break that down, looking at market segmentation, location, language and their types of behavior. Ways how you can discover this are through conducting market research such as surveys or focus groups, learning best practice from websites of successful competitors and talking to your sales department to get a better understanding of customer needs or even customer frustrations.

Website Objectives

So, next we're going to look at a very important concept. What is an onsite conversion? So, a conversion is any interaction or engagement that a user makes with your website. And when looking at your website, you're going to want to analyze what elements or what onsite factors you really want a user to engage or perform when they visit your site. This could be filling out a form, as I mentioned, or it could be spending a certain duration of time onsite. To take this concept further, it is important to decide on some of the higher-level goals within your website.

Examples of different conversion goals may be viewing a video, downloading a brochure, filling out a contact form, or completing a purchase. All of these goals can be created and tracked using Google Analytics. We will touch on Google Analytics in more detail later in the course but it’s very important to report on traffic and conversions on a weekly basis so you can monitor website and conversion progress.

SEO Objectives

As opposed to business are website objectives. The SEO objectives for a website are typically going to be concerned with improving a site’s organic ranking.

The knock-on effect of this is going to be more organic traffic being driven to the site. Next, the goal is going to be to increase user engagement. If you have online videos, content or form completes, you’re going to want your users to engage with them or actually complete the online forms. The final SEO metric is your conversion rate. Conversion rate is a measure of the amount of sales or conversions divided by the amount of traffic that you drive to the site. A higher conversion rate is a really good metric, a really good test of the quality of the traffic that’s being driven through to the site.
To help with your SEO project, there are numerous tools you can use. A lot of these tools are Google-owned products and here we’re going to look at four of the free tools you can use. Firstly, and possibly most importantly, is Google Analytics. Google Analytics is a tool whereby you can measure the traffic that’s coming through to your site, [and] see which channels this traffic is being driven through. And then you can create goals and see how users are engaging with your site. You can also view and analyze this data in very interesting ways whereby you can see traffic by location, by demographic, and there’s a wealth of data and you can find it displayed in a very user-friendly format.

Next, you have Google Search Console. This is a tool mainly aimed at website developers or the person who’s managing the website. It allows you to check the health of your website and to carry out manual tasks that can improve the performance of your website like uploading a site map or robots.txt. Again, this is something we’re going to focus on later in the course.

Another tool is Google Keyword Planner. And this allows you to see search volume and competition for a number of keywords. It’s very handy when you’re carrying out keyword research from the outset of a campaign.

Finally, you have Google Trends. This is similar to Google Keyword Planner in that it allows you to input a set of keywords but, opposed to search volume, it will give you seasonality trends which allow you to see the months of the year the search volume for your set of keywords is higher than others.

There are also a number of paid tools to help you with an SEO project. The paid tools are typically on a monthly subscription basis and allow you to go into more in-depth detail to help out with your SEO project. Examples of these are Majestic SEO which is an excellent site for carrying out link building projects and gives you great intelligence on links both external and internal within your site. Moz is one of the most popular SEO tools out there. It can be used to crawl your site and give an overall domain authority for your site and it offers client-friendly dashboards where you can dip in and out and see how your organic performance is going. SEMrush is a tool that offers also a site crawl functionality. You can monitor your organic rankings, and it also offer help with link building projects and very beneficially you can monitor your competitor’s activity.

Screaming Frog is a website crawler that allows you to crawl an entire website and discover the key elements towards analyzing the onsite SEO. Typically, these tools have the ability to crawl sites very quickly and pinpoint the issues that you need to focus on. However, it’s worth doing some research to find out which tool is best going to suit the needs of your individual project. Here we have a screen grab from SEMrush. This tool is particularly useful in that once it crawls a site, it awards the site an overall score. It also outlines the errors and warnings associated with the site and as you go through and carry out the fixes that the tool highlights, you will see that overall site score will improve.
LESSON 3: IMPLEMENTING TECHNICAL SEO
**Site Architecture**

We’re going to discuss site architecture, content duplication, robots.txt files, user experience, sitemaps, server redirects, and page speed. First up, we’re going to discuss site architecture. Similar to the foundations and structure of a house, it’s extremely important that a website is structured logically and in a structured manner. Websites that are structured consistently and logically are easier for search engines to crawl and understand. A clear and easy-to-follow website will enable a great user experience and great user experience results in great website rankings.

Another benefit of a strong site architecture is that easy crawling and indexing allows for better understanding of the site as a result, and better site links. Some other concepts to grasp when it comes to site architecture are that subfolders should be used to group related content together. Also, in terms of URLs, the keywords should be structured from left to right as this is how search engines crawl URLs. Ultimately, the goal of your site and the architecture within this is to drive users through to conversion in as few clicks as possible.

So, we have a case study here using BMW’s website as an example. Suppose a user wants to book a test drive for a BMW X5. They input “BMW X5” into their search engine and through the organic listings click through to the BMW website. They will usually go through the home page, or even better if they’re delivered through to an SUV page. From this, they will go to a subcategory page which will display all the various information relevant to them, such as specifications, pricing about the model. There should also hopefully be a call to action here where the user can clearly see where they can book a test drive. This will drive them to a form where they complete and book a test drive for their local dealership. Using this example, we’ve shown how a user can go through from search term right through to a conversion complete in no more than three clicks.

A final concept to be aware of when we’re talking about site architecture is internal links. Internal links are ones which link from one page of a domain to a different page on the same domain. They can help search engines identify content, understand the relationship between different pages, and also to understand the density of the related content. They are commonly used in the main navigation of a site. Internal links are used for three main reasons. They allow users to navigate a website easily, they help establish the hierarchy between different information within the website, and they help spread authority from the home page right throughout different pages of the website.

**Robots.txt Files**

Robots.txt file is a simple text file placed on your web server which tells web crawlers whether they should access certain information or not on your website. The robots.txt file controls how search engines see and interact with your web pages. And, if there are any areas of your site that you would rather a search engine didn’t crawl – i.e. that you don’t want them to index – you can issue a robots.txt file that disallows the URL path that you ultimately want to block.

The image on slide here shows a number of examples of what you may see in a typical robots.txt file. The image on the top left is disallowing no pages, so all pages of the site will be crawled and indexed. And the image top left is disallowing any page that has a forward slash, so it’s going to basically disallow most pages on the overall website. As you can see in the lower images, you can also block individual folders or image files if you wish them not to be crawled. Robots.txt file is always located in the same position on a website, and it can be loaded from any browser.

To view a site’s robots.txt file all you need to do is include “/robots.txt” at the end of the domain name. The above example is one I pulled from Nike.com and, as you can see, they have disallowed
certain pages. So, they have disallowed any pages that contains a .swf image. They’ve also disallowed any PDF pages across the site, and any page that begins with “/storelocator”. They do not want to rank for those. They’ve also included characters that detail the shape of the Nike Swoosh and a message to just crawl it, which I thought was quite cool.

Sitemaps

A sitemap is a file where you can list all of the web pages on your website and give search engines an idea of the organization of the site content. Search engine crawlers use sitemaps to more intelligently crawl your website, and you can use a sitemap to give the search engines an idea of the content that’s on your website, so through video, image, or mobile content. An example being that you can give a cue to search engines as to video length and image subject matter. You can create a sitemap manually or there are a number of third-party tools online that will crawl your site and issue and generate a sitemap for you. Sitemaps should be tested and uploaded using Google Search Console, and you can also use a sitemap to add your robots.txt file and submit it along with image, video, and further information to Google Search Console.
LESSON 4: IMPLEMENTING ON-PAGE SEO
On-page Optimization

On-page SEO is “the process of refining the content and structure of a website, so that it will be indexed and ranked by search engines by means of keywords, new content, meta tags, and other site reports.” Basically, on-page looks at all the on-page components that contribute to each page of your website. First up, we’re going to look at meta titles, or as they’re sometimes called, page titles. A meta title is the main text that describes a webpage and one of the first things that a search bot is going to look at when it’s analyzing the content of a page. Meta titles can appear in two places. You will see them in your search browser at the top of the page, and you’ll also see them in the search engine results page within the search listings. Obviously, the keywords you use in your meta title are going to be crucial, and you’ll want them to be relevant to the page itself.

The above meta title is from asos.com and is extremely well-structured. As you can see, it’s using all the important keywords, it’s the right character length, and it’s descriptive of what you’re going to expect on-page. Another important thing it includes is it has the brand name at the end, where often people make the mistake of including the brand name at the start of the page title. There are a number of best practices when writing meta titles. Very importantly, the title needs to be unique for every page. If you have a duplicate title across a number of pages, the search engines won’t know which page contains the most important context and which page to index. Secondly, the title needs to be keyword-rich and contain keywords of high value and search volume. The title needs to be within 65 characters. Again, this is just an estimate because, realistically, it’s carried out in pixel length, but if your page title is too long, it will be truncated or cut off. So it’s very important to use the space you have to work with, but not go over the character limit. It is also important to structure the page title, so that the keywords you’re optimizing the page for appear at the beginning of the title. Often, you will see a brand at the start of a page title, but actually, it’s better practice to have the keywords first, a description of what’s on-page, and then the brand name to finish the title.

Meta descriptions sit just below the meta title on the search engine results page. While not important as a ranking factor, meta descriptions are extremely important in encouraging click-through rate from search engine results page. A well-structured meta description will give a user an insight into the type of content they can expect once they visit a page. In terms of best practices, as with page titles, it is important the descriptions are unique. They also have character restrictions. They ideally need to be within 70 to 160 characters. Again, we want to ensure that they’re keyword-rich, and ideally, we want them to include a call-to-action.

Another important of on-page optimization is URL structure. The URL, similar to the postal address of a house, is the location of where individual webpages are located. Every webpage on your site is going to have a unique URL, and it’s important that the structure of this URL is legible, contains relevant keywords, and offers a positive user experience. Looking at the slide here, we have an example of two different URLs. As you can see from the top one, it’s well-structured and contains individual keywords and you have an idea of the section that you’ll be delivered through to on the page. The below URL is using some internal filing or coding system that will likely cause confusion and likely to deter a user from clicking on that link. In terms of best practices for URL structure, you ideally want your URLs to contain the target keywords. You want them to be as concise as possible. Long URLs can be difficult to read and can further confuse a user. You want to use hyphens that can encourage and improve readability of the overall URL, and finally, you want to use a bread crumb structure that can give the user an idea what section of the site they’re being delivered through to.

Next, we’re going to look at headers, or as they’re often called, H1 tags. Having heading tags is not a huge component in terms of ranking factors for SEO, but it gives search engines a greater idea of
what is contained within the page. It also offers user-friendliness in terms of separating different content. The heading should act as further reinforcement for what the page content is actually about. In terms of best practice for header tags, it's important to have one H1 tag on each page. It's also important to avoid duplication, and if you're going to have further headings, it's important to order them in descending order. So the second heading would be H2, H3, etc. Search engines are enabled to crawl or understand images once they visit your website. As a result, it's very important to input image or ALT tags, as they are known.

The image on slide here attempts to capture what an ALT tag essentially is. Here, the search engine can’t crawl the image of the tree, but once it sees the ALT text of, alt=tree, obviously, it understands that what is contained within the image is a picture of a tree. The purpose of ALT tags is to give a search engine information as to what is contained within an image, so that it can understand the content of a page and rank it accordingly. ALT tags are important to provide text for users who can't see images when in their browsers and also for screen readers, for visually-impaired users. It also, potentially, allows the image on your pages to rank in the image search results. In terms of best practice for image, or ALT, tags, all images on a website should be stored in a central location or file. The file name you give the actual image itself is also important and should be descriptive and keyword-rich. If uploading a site map, it is important to include the image names to give search engines a further idea of the images that exist within a website.

And finally, you should use easy-to-read sentences or phrases. You don't want to use overly jargon terms, just simple, easy-to-understand words. Anchor text, or hyperlinks, as you may know them, is the clickable text that links one webpage to another. Using anchor text for internal links can increase the amount of pages that a user will visit each time they come to your website, which improves site engagement and reduces bounce rate. The best practice for using anchor text is to avoid using keywords like “Here” or “Click here.” Instead, you should use the more keyword-rich terms and the keywords that described the page that you're about to drive the user through to. It is also important not to flood a webpage with anchor text. Otherwise, it makes the page difficult to read.

Finally, in this section, we're going to look at page content. Of course, your page content can take many forms. It could be text-based, image-based, or video-based. Ideally, a webpage will be a combination of all of these. And when thinking about the content of your webpage, it’s really important to think in terms of quality, rather than quantity. What you want to do is not flood the user with lots of information. These days, as we know, lots of users are coming to websites on mobile devices, and what we want to offer them is engaging, structured content that's visually appealing and informative for them. In terms of written content, a general rule of thumb is that there should be about 400 words on each individual page, and as with all on-page factors, all of the content should be unique. If there is duplicate content on different pages, these cause a confusion for the search engines, and they don’t know how to process and index it. We'll go through the issues surrounding duplicate content in more detail later in the course.

**Keyword Research**

Next, we’re going to look at keyword research. Keyword research is the activity of identifying the most useful keywords to be used in describing your offerings and is an essential component to carry out at the beginning of an SEO project. Keyword research involves compiling a list of keywords and analyzing which of those are highest in search volume. This will give you a clue as to the types of content you should prepare on your site. Typically, as we mentioned, short tail keywords are going to be the highest in search volume. So, you can prepare some content based around these short tail keywords but also, you'll discover some long tail keywords that are also high in search volume and will also give you some cues as to developing further content for your website.
LESSON 5:
IMPLEMENTING
OFF-PAGE SEO
**Backlink Analysis**

So, firstly, we’re going to talk about backlink analysis and link building strategies. A backlink is a hyperlink from an external page on a website linking back to your own website, and link building is the process of acquiring external links or hyperlinks from external websites that link back to your own site. The number and quality of external links can be a huge factor in SEO. Recently, there’s been a shift in Google’s algorithm whereby better quality links are rewarded rather than a higher quantity of links. Previously, there were black hat SEO methods whereby you could pay to get your site hyperlinked on numerous websites throughout the internet. A lot of these sites, however, were of really poor quality, and so, recent Google algorithm updates have sought to improve that, and so, these days, high-quality backings are rewarded, so it’s in your interest to get your site referenced on reputable sites rather than many links on spam or poor quality sites.

**Social Media Profiles**

Next up, we’re going to discuss social media profiles, how you can drive qualified traffic from those profiles back to your site. Maintaining an active social media profile is very important, and a great way to increase your brand awareness and to speak directly to your audience. It can also be a very useful method through which to place articles and content where users can click through and be directed from Facebook or Twitter, for example, back to your own website. You may be surprised to learn, however, that despite having huge audiences, these social media sites are treated like any other website.

As such, it’s important to remember that the amount of followers your Facebook or Twitter profile may have, it will not be taken into an account as a factor in your overall website ranking. However, it’s important to use these profiles to build brand equity and as a source to drive qualified traffic back to your site.
LESSON 6:
IMPLEMENTING SEO IN A MOBILE ENVIRONMENT
**Mobile Friendliness**

A very simple and handy tool to use is the Google Mobile-Friendly Test. This site allows you to input your URL, and the tool will scrape your site and deliver a verdict whether or not your site is considered mobile-friendly. If there are any issues with your site, there are numerous resources where you can see recommendations and improvements to improve the quality of your mobile site.

A very important component of mobile SEO is page layout. Obviously, mobile screens are smaller than those on desktop, so the opportunity to display information is that bit less. You need to be a bit more concise with your page content. Also, the way you navigate pages on mobile is obviously different. Whereas you click through a mouse or a cursor on desktop, you use your fingers through a mobile. So it’s important that call to action buttons stand out, are in a different color, and are large enough that they’re easy to scroll through and responsive to touch. Poor design can lead to accidental clicks, and obviously lead to a very poor mobile experience.

Another important element to consider when you’re thinking about mobile content is that a lot of the search queries on mobile are quite different to those on desktop, in that they’re localized or looking for immediate information. So there’ll be a lot of niche keywords through mobile searches, and that represents an opportunity to create mobile-specifically optimized pages. Some examples of which may be “Apple Store 5th Avenue,” or “Barclays bank phone number.” There are typical searches that are carried out on the go, where a user is searching for very specific information.

Another important consideration when putting together mobile content is to avoid lengthy contact forms. As opposed to on desktop, where someone is going to have more patience and time to go through a form, on mobile you really only want to capture the most important information and to make it as easy as possible for the user to submit the form. The important consideration to think about mobile functionality is to simplify the page content as much as possible. Often, when a user visits the desktop variation of a site, there’s a moving carousel, and there are a number of headers along the top of the page of options where you can visit further pages of the site. When visiting a mobile, obviously, there’s less space onsite and it’s more important to create a nested table, where a user can click, it will expand the table, and the user can then select the area of the site they want to visit. It’s very important to avoid mobile popups as they are very frustrating for the user and can lead to a very high bounce rate.

We’ve discussed page speed previously, but page speed is even more important in the context of mobile SEO. A fast site is a good user experience, and a good user experience leads to higher conversions. A very slow page load time or page speed is going to lead to poor user experience, frustration, and high bounce rates. According to an official webmaster tutorial from Google, what’s considered the threshold for page speed is two seconds. Anything above this will be deemed to be slow and cause frustration. At Google, they aim for under a second. As Google aim to continue to move towards a mobile-first environment, page speed is going to continue to increase in importance.

On the slide here, we have a screen grab of an example where a mobile site is considered mobile-friendly. It has a very strong score of 98 out of 100. However, its mobile page speed is considered poor. So how can you go about improving that page speed? There are a number of areas, namely leveraging browser caching. You can enable compression, or by reducing the file size of a number of onsite components. Or you can optimize images, while still making sure that the images are high-resolution or just reducing the file size, and you can minimize the amount of CSS, JavaScript, and onsite code that you have, because that also slows down page speed. Obviously, with more and more searches, and more and more site traffic coming through mobile, it is in Google’s interest to
create an environment where mobile sites are as fast as possible, and where mobile pages really load instantaneously.

As a result, they have created a project called “Accelerated Mobile Pages,” or AMP. This is a Google-backed project, whereby they have created a website as a resource aimed at webmasters on how you can develop pages and an overall website that is extremely mobile-friendly, and minimizes the amount of content script code on the site to make page loads as fast as possible.
LESSON 7: IMPROVING LOCAL SEO
Local SEO

But firstly, what is local SEO? Local SEO is SEO and factors that are concerned with localized businesses, and their efforts to rank well for searches that are taking place close to their business. All of the same context and concepts we’ve discussed throughout the course still apply for localized SEO. But there are a few other methods to make sure that a local business’s website can rank for those more localized searches.

The great thing about localized SEO is it removes the guesswork from marketing. Instead of doing door-drops and leaflet-drops, your site or your business can appear for people in your area who are searching for products or services that you’re selling. The first area we’re going to look at within local SEO is NAP consistency. NAP is an abbreviation for “name, address, and phone number.” It’s crucially important that all of these aspects are listed consistently and on your own website, and on external websites across the web. Local results are served based on a web user’s location and their IP address. So as a result, it’s really important for your business to establish your physical address, so it can be issued for local search results. This can be done through NAP. To ensure that your full NAP appears across your whole website, you need to be consistent in terms of the formatting of how it’s listed and how it’s spelled. Furthermore, you need to use the exact same details and format when you mention your address on external websites. It’s also important for your content of your website to be localized.

The idea of a localized content strategy is that there will be some page content that will be unique to users based on their geographical area. So, be it at a state, city, or even micro-level, like a town. So some variables that may differ from location to location are things like shipping rates, warranty information, repair, or dealer locations. So the idea here is to build out bespoke, individual pages that will answer queries no matter where the user is located. When they search, they will get issued with the most relevant page based on their location.

Google My Business

Google My Business is becoming ever more important to incorporate as part of your overall SEO strategy. These days, Google My Business profiles are listing more and more for generic searches and they’re appearing above the organic listings. A well-optimized Google My Business page can act as a further referral of external traffic through to your site. To activate a Google My Business profile, you need to create an account and fill out as much information about your business as possible.

So the address, phone number, store opening times, and images, photographs of the store, etc. To activate the account, you’ll need to verify it and verify the business address. And once you’ve done this, the profile will be live and will be available to index for search results. As a web user, you will often get issued with a Google My Business profile for a company based on your location and the web result that is closest to you.

So for localized businesses, for example, restaurants, florists, hairdressers, it’s really important to have a strong and fully filled out Google My Business profile so that your profile can index, even if your website doesn’t have a strong ranking.

A Google My Business profile can be optimized in much of the same way that a regular webpage can be. And so, you should ensure that you are completing all of the following aspects. So you’d like to have a long and unique description that accurately sums up your business. It’s important to choose the correct categories that your business operates within.
You want to upload as many images as possible and add a local phone number. You want to add a business address that's consistent with your website and also local directories and also upload a high-res profile image. And finally and very importantly is to have your site’s opening hours and once you have all of this information, your profile goes live, then you’ll be able to get real reviews from consumers and hopefully, get positive reviews and boost your listing.

**Local Reviews**

Sticking with reviews and as we’ve discussed previously, online reviews are becoming ever more important for SEO in general. But obviously, for localized SEO, they’re just as important as they would be for wider campaigns. So some of the stats we have on the slide here, 90% of consumers say their buying decisions are influenced by online reviews, while 86% say buying decisions were influenced by negative online reviews. As a result, it’s really, really important to start acquiring reviews and obviously that they are positive reviews. It’s not just the likes of Google My Business. External sites such as Yelp and whatever review sites might be relevant for your business are crucially important sources. The thought process behind getting reviews is to be completely transparent, not to try and influence users in any way. Also, if you get a negative review, just to treat it honestly and reply in a constructive mannerism, not to get irate and rant at the user online.

**Local Link Building**

Also, important to the local SEO strategy is localized link building. So we’ve discussed link building previously, and all of the same concepts would apply here. However, in this instance, your goal isn’t to get external links on sites that have a really strong domain authority, although that would obviously help. What’s more important here is getting links on sites that are localized or relevant to your business. The thought process is to get your external link on websites where other local users are talking about similar things to what you do.

The other thought to consider here about local directories, while great for link building, are also great for developing citations. A citation is an online reference to your business’s name, address, and phone number, NAP, as we discussed previously. An example of strong localized link building would be mentions for your company in local community publications, online publications, or events or other prominent and local business websites.
LESSON 8: MEASURING AND REPORTING ON SEO CAMPAIGNS
**SEO Reporting**

So firstly, on reporting, as the old mantra goes, “If you can’t measure it, you can’t manage it.” As with all other ways of digital marketing, SEO should be tracked and monitored right from the onset of a campaign. In the beginning of a project, it’s ideal to take 30 to 50 keywords, benchmark their organic rankings, and then as the project continues and at the end of a project, you can monitor fluctuations and how your rankings have hopefully improved over time. You should also monitor average monthly traffic, organic traffic, conversions, and things like onsite engagement. Then, looking at year-on-year trends can also be interesting to see if you’ve been able to drive more organic traffic, for example, in a month this year as opposed to a previous year.

Obviously, the goal of your SEO efforts is going to be to improve keyword rankings and drive more traffic through to the site, and boost conversions. To ensure that all of your SEO efforts have been tracked correctly, it’s really important to implement a tagging solution. As we’ve discussed previously, Google Analytics is a particularly strong and accurate tagging tool. But something else you can look at is potentially Google Tag Manager.

Tag Manager is a container tag system, where you place a piece of code on your website, and then it acts as a system whereby you can add additional code, additional tags and tracking to your overall website without adding more code to the site. This is crucial, because the more code you add, the slower the site gets. So linking back to site speed, Tag Manager is a way of not only improving reporting, but ensuring that you’re maximizing page speed.

**SEO Measurement**

So obviously, the main metrics you’re going to measure are going to be your organic rank and your organic traffic. But there are some other elements you can look at as well. The screen grab on the slide here is from a tool called “SEMrush”. What SEMrush allows you to do is crawl a site and it’ll give an overall site score. Once you go through and you’re carrying out your SEO project, making all onsite fixes, you can see from the first screen grab to the second that the errors and warnings have been reduced. As a result, the overall site score has improved. This is a really good measurable way of also seeing that your SEO efforts are going well, and hopefully on the backend then you’re seeing your rankings and organic traffic improve.

So those are the main metrics, really, to focus on throughout your SEO project. But there are other things you can pay attention to that will give you some kind of intuition as to how your project is performing successfully. So an example of these are external backlinks. So obviously, when engaging in a link building project, it’s important to grow the number of links on your site. You can use paid tools like SEMrush and Moz, as we’ve discussed, to monitor and make sure that you can increase the number of external links onsite. Next, it’s important to ensure the quality of backlinks is really strong. As we discussed previously, it’s not all about quantity. What’s more important is the quality or domain authority of the external sites that you’re placing your link on. So again, using paid tools, you can target and track external websites that have particularly strong domain authority, and try and get placements of your website on sites that have a very strong reputation and have a huge list of users that you can then try and redirect through to your website.

Another area to look at is organic traffic year on year. Obviously, with search volume, there’s a lot of seasonality, whereby some search terms are higher in certain given months of the year. So if you’re comparing month on month within a year, it may not be a fair comparison. Whereas if you’re
comparing December traffic in 2016 back to 2015, you’re seeing kind of similar sets of data, and you can hopefully see improvements you’ve made to organic traffic year on year.

Another thing you can monitor is referral traffic. Referral traffic refers to any user that’s visiting your site through an external website. So obviously, this is going to increase based on your link building efforts. So as you’re going through and gaining more external links, hopefully your referral traffic is increasing. Your referral traffic links will give you a good idea as to how successful your link building efforts have been.

A final but interesting area to focus on would be landing page performance. So a good example here would be to take five key pages from your website, the five pages that get the highest volume of traffic, for example. You’re really just looking to benchmark and compare engagement metrics on this page on a monthly basis, so time onsite, on-page conversions, things like that. What you can do is test and trial different areas of page content, the way the page is laid out, different calls to action, change the color of buttons, and constantly monitor your engagement of pages and trying to improve things like on-page dwell time, and reduce bounce rates for individual pages.