

# Improving Your Organic SEO

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Organic SEO (search engine optimization) is the phrase used to describe processes to obtain a natural placement on organic search engine results pages.

Increasing your rankings on the organic side of search engine results requires planning, creativity and above all patience. Three to six months is definitely not an exaggeration in the amount of time it may take for the internet to recognize you... But it is worth it.

I do not know how many times I have been approached by someone who makes a change to their website and then is frustrated when they don't jump up in the rankings the next day. Changes, especially subtle ones on infrequently crawled sites, can take many weeks to start showing up in the search engines.

*Myth #1: PPC (pay-per-click) ads will help/hurt rankings. This one is funny to me because about half the people who think that running Google AdWords will affect their organic rankings believe that they will bring them down; the other half believe they will bring them up. That alone should tell you that neither is true!*

**Website Content:** Original and informative content is one of the best things you can do to improve your organic search engine rankings. Believe me when I say quality is definitely better than quantity in this case.

Generally your website is going to be an extension of your business or personal life, in either case you should have plenty of unique information to write about. Take the time to write informative articles and try to keep your site fresh with new articles as often as possible. It not only lets the search engines know they need to be visiting your site more often, but it also gives your readers a reason to come back. If you write a good article, chances are people are going to link to it as a resource for others. A great byproduct of a good article is back links.

**Back Links:** In search engine optimization (SEO) terminology a backlink is a hyperlink that links from a web page, back to your own web page or website. Also called an Inbound Link (IBL) these links are important in determining the popularity (or importance) of your website. Some search engines, including Google, will consider websites with more backlinks more relevant in search results pages.

Every time an outside source links to a page on your website, this is considered a back link. If you are looking to improve your organic search rankings, take a look at your current back links and the back links of others and see where you can improve. Yahoo! and Google provide tools for checking your back links; in addition many websites offer these services for free. I suggest using a third party if you are new to back link research; it will help you minimize mistakes.

Back links help search engines determine what your content is about. Think of back links as votes for your content. When a site links to you, it is saying to the search engines (as well as to its readers) that your page has relevant information on it. When a text link is created, the text inside the link is first looked at for determining what your content is about. Additionally the surrounding text is considered in categorizing your page. It is important to have links from sites that are on topic for what your site and/or article is about.

**Organization & Navigation:**

Keep your site clean. If your visitors are having trouble finding pages and content, so will the search engines. Use menus and links that are concise and to the point, and keep all of your navigation where the user can quickly find it. It may not be necessary to directly link to every page from every other page and often times this can be confusing to both your visitor and the search engines. If the user can quickly narrow down what they are looking for they will be much happier and much more likely to link to your site. The search engines are the same way, if your links are specific and fewer they will be given more weight than a large number of general links.

**Keywords:** Define a keyword list.

It's unreasonable to assume that you will pull top rank in Google for every keyword relating to your industry. Your goal should be to pull top rank on the most desired keywords. This is an exercise that will take the effort of both marketing and management. Think about how people would search for your products and services, make a list of these keywords, and check the traffic for each term with a tool like Google's Keyword Planner. Naturally you will want to rank for the keywords with the most traffic, so put them in the order you want – most relevant first.

If you have 10 pages relating to the same set of keywords, Google will have a hard time determining which page is relevant. Instead, merge your content into a single cornerstone page. With one authoritative cornerstone page on a specific topic, there is no SEO confusion, and you should rank higher.

**Optimize your page titles:**

The <title> HTML tag defines a web page's title and is meant to be a concise description of that page's content. It is the first line of hyperlinked text Google displays in their organic search results, and it is what appears in the top frame of most web browsers for that page and in tabs. Google considers this to be the second-most important on-page SEO element AFTER OVERALL CONTENT (overall page content is still the first).

When you write your page titles, keep them less than 70 characters, since any text beyond that will be cut off when listed in Google's organic results. You should include your important keywords in the title, preferably in the beginning. It is also a good idea to include your company name as well towards the end.

**Write compelling meta descriptions:**

The <meta name="description" content=""> HTML tag is meant to be a concise explanation of a web page's content. Google displays your meta description beneath the page title in their organic results. While meta descriptions aren't as important as page titles in your Google ranking, they do play a big role in getting clicks from users. People read descriptions as a preview of your page and use it to determine if your content is worth visiting. You should keep your meta descriptions to under 150 characters since Google won't display text beyond that. You should also include target keywords in your text, since any words matching a user's search query will be displayed in bold.

*Myth #2: You need to update your site frequently. Frequent updates to your pages may increase the search engine crawl rate, but it won't increase your rankings. If your site doesn't need to change, don't change it just because you think the search engines will like it better. They won't. In fact, some of the highest ranking sites in Google haven't been touched in years*

**Your URL names matter:**

Shorter URLs seem to perform better in Google search rankings than longer ones, so keep that in mind when you architect your site. You should also include keywords in your URL names, and try to place them closer to your domain name. When you have multiple keywords in your URLs, separate them with hyphens.

**NO TRICKS:**

Black hat SEO refers to the practice of trying to trick the search engines into giving you higher rankings by using unethical tactics, such as invisible words. The risk is just too great. Even if you enjoy a temporary boost in rankings due to black hat tactics, it's likely to be short lived. Google is getting better and better at spotting dirty tricks and sooner or later the progress you made will be wiped out by an algorithm update, or worse, your site will get removed from the index altogether.

**Business Directories:**

One way to improve your site's search engine optimization is to submit it to online directories. I don't recommend paying for a listing when there are so many free resources (over 50) and this is one of the lesser effective options for SEO.

**Social Media:**

Social signals are already impacting Google SEO rankings and many industry experts believe that will only increase. If you haven't already, consider setting up some social media pages such as Google+ and Facebook, and start engaging with your audience.

Investing in organic SEO is more important now than ever before, despite the current difficulty everyone finds themselves facing regarding the lack of organic keyword data and traffic. Your business definitely needs to have an SEO strategy in place if you are interested in succeeding in terms of online marketing; it remains one of the single most important components of any organization's branding efforts and online presence.

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