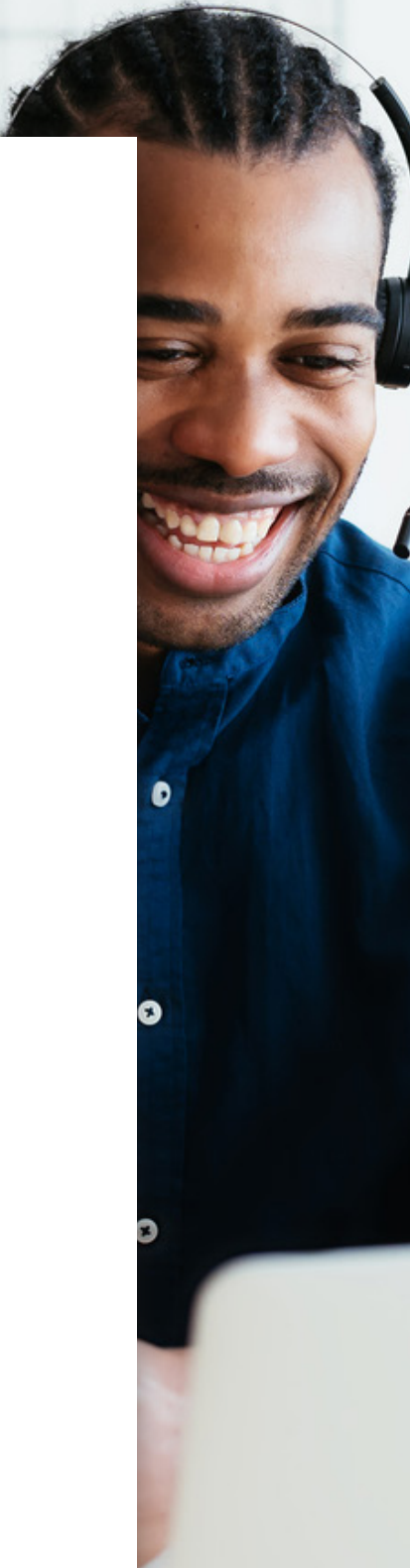How to
Use SEO to Get in Front of Your Ideal Client

Search Engine Optimization, better known as SEO, is a business owner's best friend when it comes to landing on the first page of a search engine. In other words, it's your ticket to ensuring your business is discovered by potential clients that are looking for your services.

In this month's guide, we're sharing expert SEO insights that you can start using immediately to get in front of your ideal client. With this guide, you'll be able to make sure that everything you create is SEO-friendly. From easier SEO methods to implementing SEO tools, start putting these best practices to work today and set yourself up for success in the future.

This month's guide shares:

- Strategies that will help you reach your ideal clients.

- SEO tools that you can start using right now in your business.

- Tips to ensure your SEO efforts are successful.

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CREATE A WORKFLOW FOR YOUR SEO

All that hard work you did attracting your ideal clients to your website with highly relevant SEO content will be for nothing you can't convert them once they get there. With tools like the HoneyBook Contact Form embedded right on your website, you can make it easy for your ideal client to take action and begin the booking process.

Go from first hello to final payment with an all-in-one business management platform like HoneyBook!

TRY HONEYBOOK

HOW TO USE SEO TO GET IN FRONT OF YOUR IDEAL CLIENT

1

ATTRACT YOUR TARGET AUDIENCE WITH SEO. Search engines have changed and they now seek out the same qualities that your ideal clients do: well-written, interesting and useful content. On page 2 Sophy Dale discusses the top five things to know about SEO that will help you attract your target audience and how keyword research may lead to a plethora of creative ideas.

2

USE SEO TOOLS TO GROW YOUR BUSINESS. With all the other tasks on your plate, getting a handle on your SEO might sound like a tall order. Luckily there are a lot of SEO tools that make it easy to dive in and start learning. On page 5 Abbey Oslin and Courtney Petersen are sharing the eight SEO tools they love to use in their business and best of all, they're all free!

3

BUILD A SUCCESSFUL WEBSITE WITH SEO. On page 10 Christy Price outlines the essential components you need to consider when optimizing your website for SEO, plus she shares all the ways the website builder platform Squarespace makes implementing these best practices easy.

PRO TIP: In the world of SEO, the way you name your URLs is essential. In general, search engines dislike reading long URLs with complicated structures. It's preferable to keep URLs short with a focus on the keyword(s).

GET FEATURED

We believe in elevating the voices of our community, and we'd love to elevate yours! Submit content for an opportunity to be featured in next month's Rising Tide Society TuesdaysTogether PDF guide. therisingtidesociety.submittable.com/submit.

THE TOP FIVE THINGS TO REMEMBER ABOUT SEO

Sophy Dale

The majority of entrepreneurs and small business owners are intimidated by SEO. There's a lot to learn and it all appears to be technical yet vague and impenetrable. But getting a grasp on it might be a lot easier than you think and the benefits of knowing how to utilize it effectively are enormous.

The plethora of discovery calls with possible new clients who have found me as a consequence of a Google search (in my case, they're generally seeking a copywriter or someone to help them find their niche or articulate their message) is the huge advantage of working on my business SEO.

So, aside from getting ready for a steady stream of new clients, what else should you know about SEO? Here are the top five things to remember about SEO that will help you get in front of your ideal client:

1. OPTIMIZE YOUR MAIN WEB PAGES

Increase your site's domain authority by aiming to get more backlinks through media coverage and guest posting. With SEO, you can keep on adding to the library of content you've already created or compose a blog series to drive traffic based on a particular keyword.

Ultimately, if you set up your core web pages so that they're optimized for search, you can sit back and relax knowing that Google is doing most of the heavy lifting(even while you sleep) to serve up your site to people who are actively looking for the exact service you provide. Pretty cool, huh?

Google is the holy grail of marketing, you can set it and forget it!

2. PAIR SEO MARKETING AND REFERRAL MARKETING

You can break free from the social media hamster wheel, especially if you combine SEO efforts with a solid referral campaign. Having an all-in-one CRM like HoneyBook at your fingertips will help you manage your client relationships and provide stellar customer service, which leads to more referrals and glowing testimonials. This SEO marketing and referral marketing pairing can result in a fully booked-out business.

3. KEYWORD RESEARCH IS YOUR FRIEND

We've all seen those sites where keywords have been awkwardly stuffed into the content so that the page reads like it's been written by a robot. Keywords (or more often, keyword phrases) are your window into the minds of your target audience. These phrases reveal what's keeping them up at night and what their biggest struggles are which is fabulous information for content-planning purposes.

Pro Tip: Use free keyword research tools (like Ubersuggest.io) to gain insight into your ideal client's mind by seeing how many people are searching for information on each keyword per month.

Keyword research leads you to a goldmine of content ideas for blogs, newsletters and social media posts. Now that you know what's on people's minds, you can write about it. You can generate your whole content marketing calendar by working out which keywords you want to target and when you want to write about them.

Search engines have changed and they now seek out the same qualities that your ideal clients do: well-written, interesting and useful content. A longer piece of content with internal links to other relevant pages or articles on your site, as well as connections out to one or two high authority sites elsewhere on the web, can get you higher rankings from Google.

Google is also searching for material that will keep readers on the page. Try keeping your readers interested by using narrative, empathy and other writing strategies that don't use keyword stuffing, all of which will enhance your search rankings. The more engaging and organically written your material is, the more it will appeal to your readers and audience as well as Google's search bots.

4. DON'T MAKE SEO WRITING AN EXTRA CHORE

Of course, if the keyword research you're conducting generates a lot of blog post ideas, don't feel like you have to perform twice as much effort as before. Don't put keyword-driven material on top of your other content marketing efforts. Instead, use your keyword knowledge to support your content marketing strategies. Repurpose your material as a blog post, social media post, newsletter, etc.

Depending on your style and preference, you can write longer SEO-focused blog posts and then break them up and repurpose them as Instagram captions, Facebook or LinkedIn posts. This same content can also be the basis for your newsletter, discussion prompts in a community that you run or you can use these topics to help you plan the content strategy for your podcast.

However you do it, make sure you make full use of the market research that your keywords have provided you with. Repurposing content in a clever way will ensure that you're working smarter, not harder and will help you to avoid content creation burnout.

5. NO ONE CAN BE AN EXPERT IN ALL THE POSSIBLE FACETS OF RUNNING A SUCCESSFUL BUSINESS

If you feel that your time could be better spent doing something other than getting a grip on your SEO, but you like the sound of getting Google to help you generate business leads on autopilot, then there are various ways you can get help from an expert.

You can hire an SEO consultant to create your SEO strategy going forward or you can work with an SEO-focused copywriter. The copywriter can help write your web copy and blog posts so that you simultaneously sound like yourself, engage your ideal clients and start climbing Google's rankings.

Whatever you do, don't ignore SEO entirely. SEO is a long game and results could take anywhere from three months to a year to appear. But you'll be happy you focused on SEO when the results start rolling in - when you wake up in the morning to find that strangers were booking discovery calls with you while you were sleeping because they discovered you on Google. It's the gift that keeps on giving and how often can you say that of a marketing strategy?

SOPHY DALE
Copywriter and Messaging Coach
Sophy Dale Copywriting
Edinburgh, Scotland
@sophy_writingmentor
sophydale.com
Photo by Christina Jones Photography

8 SEO TOOLS EVERY SMALL BUSINESS NEEDS

Abbey Oslin and Courtney Petersen

Are you ready to conquer SEO this year for your small business? Maybe it's a goal you've had for a while, but you don't know where to begin. We've compiled eight of our favorite SEO tools for small business owners and entrepreneurs like yourself.

We are going to teach you how to integrate each of these SEO tools into your business workflows to make sure every piece of content you create this year is built with SEO in mind. These tools not only make SEO strategies easier, they also make the process fun and interesting; leaving you craving bigger and better results.

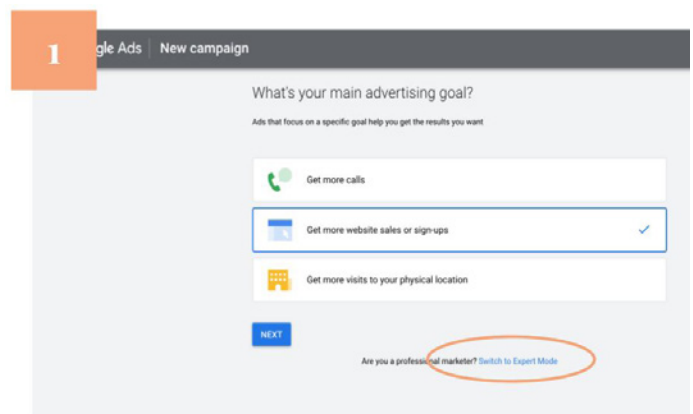Let's dive in... here are eight of our favorite SEO tools that you can begin incorporating into your small business today.
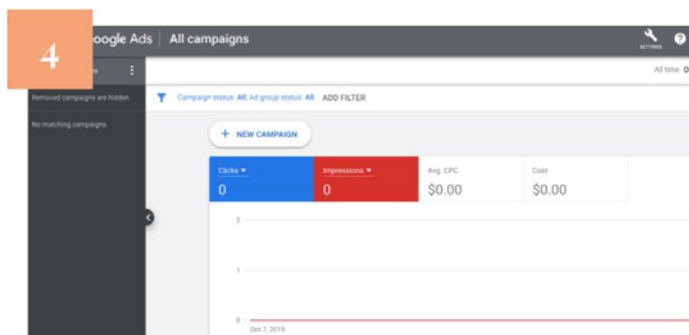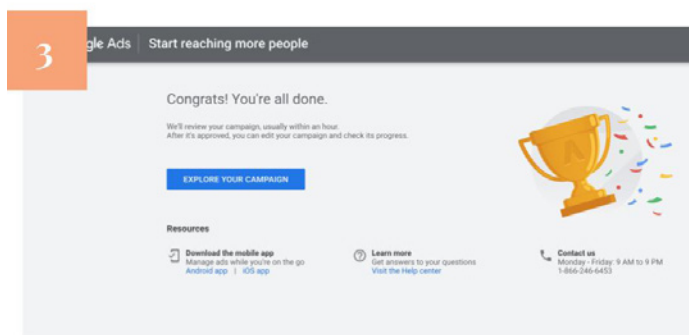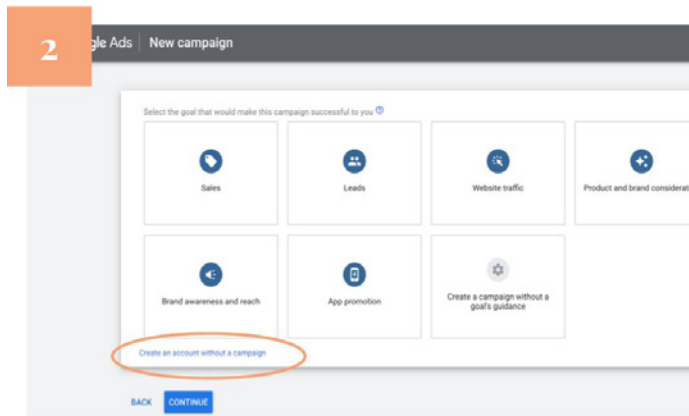
1. GOOGLE KEYWORD PLANNER

Let's start with a quick refresher on an important SEO tactic: keyword research.

What is an SEO keyword? It's a significant word from a title or document used as an index for online content. Put more simply, think about the last thing you 'Googled.' What did you type into the search bar? The combination of words you typed in, is considered a collection of SEO keywords.

Short-tail keywords are considered 1-2 highly searched words, whereas long-tail keywords are 3-5 words creating a phrase. Those articles that appeared as results on page one, most likely used those keywords in their article headline and throughout their post. Therefore, before you write any piece of online content you should be using an SEO tool to help you do this research.

Can you guess which SEO tool understands keywords best? Our little friend, Google! Google has an SEO keyword research tool called Google Keyword Planner. This tool is completely free, but the sign-up process turns a lot of people away because it appears that you need to run an ad campaign first. Don't worry, we will walk you through how to access this tool in a few quick and easy steps.

To start researching, you'll go up to the settings and tools icon in the upper right-hand corner and click "keyword planner." From here you can discover new keywords or research search volumes and forecasts. You can use this tool to determine various keywords for your website, blog, sales pages, etc. Type in the keyword you want to write about and see how often it's searched. You'll also get other related keyword ideas.

Google Keyword Planner tells us the keyword you selected is searched on average between 1k-10k times per month. Now, we understand this is a little vague. Unfortunately, this is all you get access to until you've run a campaign. After that, you are promised more insights. However, one of the reasons this is our favorite SEO keyword research tool is because it will automatically populate other keyword ideas like "personal branding photography." Oftentimes we start here, ideate a few long-tail keywords and then head over to another tool (see more below!) to explore further.

The keyword ideas you find here on Google are guaranteed to be an accurate representation of what's happening on the platform regardless of how deep the free insights go. When starting with Google, you won't need to worry about the validity of a keyword.

Here's How to Set Up Google Keyword Planner for Free:

1. You'll see a page asking you for your main advertising goal. At the bottom there is a section that asks if you are an "expert"... guess what, today you are! Click that button

2. On the next page, you will see a prompt that says "create an account without a campaign"

3. Congratulations! You've done it.

4. You are now inside the tool and can start researching your SEO keywords

2. PINTEREST

Did you know Pinterest is a search engine? That's right, just like Google! Soon-to-be brides come to Pinterest to start planning their weddings. Those looking to create a healthier lifestyle might be searching for new diets or recipes. New homeowners may be searching for inspiration for their next house project. The list goes on and on. The one thing all these searchers have in common is that they are craving education and ready to learn. Not to mention, it's the only search engine that is visually appealing. This is where we creative entrepreneurs can stand out!

So how do you use Pinterest as a tool to find SEO keywords? More specifically, long-tail keywords? It's pretty simple. Type in the topic you want to start creating content on and watch Pinterest populate the long-tail keyword based on what people are searching for most right now.
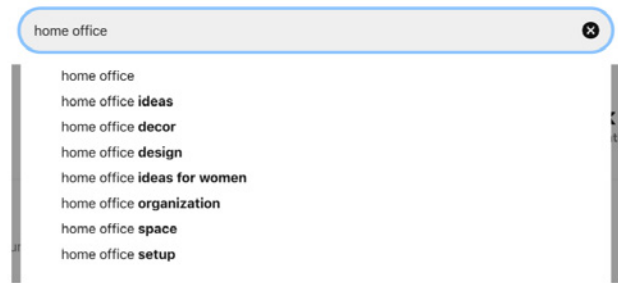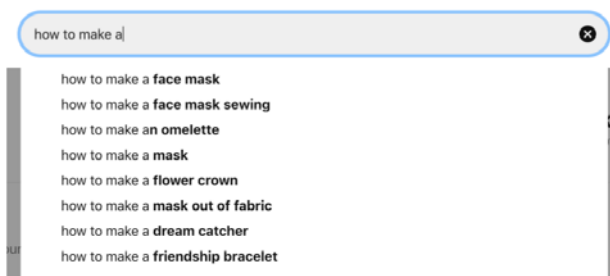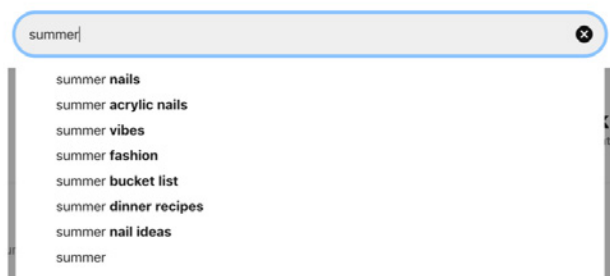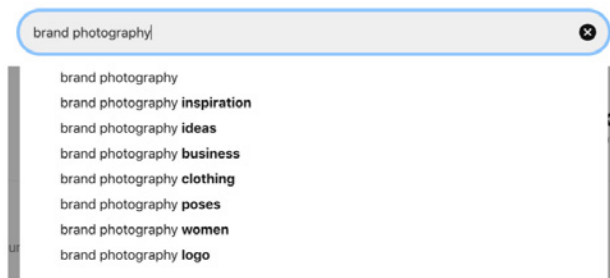
3. UBERSUGGEST

Next, we turn to one of the SEO experts, Niel Patel. His website, Ubersuggest, is one of our favorite free SEO keyword research tools. It provides similar results to Google's Keyword Planner, but is a little more user-friendly, plus, you get exact search volumes. Oftentimes we use Google Keyword Planner to find a handful of keywords we like and then bounce over to Ubersuggest to verify the search volumes.

Some of our favorite tools on Ubersuggest are:

· Google SERP (search engine result pages): you can easily see which websites are currently ranking for this keyword without having to hop on Google and research yourself.

· Volume by Month: this is amazing if you have a seasonal business or product. It allows you to understand when your audience might be searching for certain topics.

· Content Ideas: not only can you see what some popular headlines are for this specific keyword, but you can also see the number of links on Facebook & Pinterest.

SEO Pro Tip: Creating a workflow for writing online content will help you become more efficient and ensure you don't forget any important steps along the way, such as keyword research. One of the best ways to do this is with HoneyBook. Start by creating a workflow and adding in each important task along the way from keyword research to checking your analytics. You can even integrate this with your calendar. When life gets busy, these reminders

help us stay on track, especially when it comes to reaching our SEO goals.

4. GOOGLE ANALYTICS

This is an incredible SEO resource for anyone who owns a website. In short, it can help you understand who your audience is and how they find and interact with your page. In our opinion, this might be one of the most underutilized SEO tools. Most small business owners understand the importance of placing the Google Analytics pixel on their page, but they don't understand how to read the data. Here are just a few things we look for when ideating online content for SEO:

· Demographics of our audience for a specific time period (this week, month or year)

· Our audience's interests

· Top-performing blog posts when crafting new content

· Acquisition: where our traffic is coming from (organic search, social media, etc.)

The correlation between your audience demographics and content creation is super important to ensure your content is engaging and converting. Whether you are creating content for your social media accounts, blog or email list, this Google tool for entrepreneurs is the ultimate guide.

5. GOOGLE SEARCH CONSOLE

If you are ready to get serious about SEO, then Google Search Console is a must. This Google tool provides insights that cannot be found on Google Analytics. It helps you monitor your organic search rankings and is ultimately your guide to being Google's BFF.

It only takes a few seconds to add this to your website and just like almost every other Google tool, it is a proactive tracking tool. Meaning you can't go back in time to capture data - it's only forward-looking.

Having a good relationship with Google means maintaining your website to ensure your visitors have a happy experience. This resource will identify any errors such as missing links and 404 errors. But the main reason why we love this SEO tool is to understand exactly what keywords our audience is typing into Google to find us. Take a look at the screenshot below. These are all "queries" (keywords or search terms) that either generated clicks to our website from Google or appeared on the search engine page resulting in an impression. Pretty cool huh!?

Top queries

duo collective

boutique marketing agency

duo

seo crash course

short tail keywords

difference between long tail and short tail keywords in seo

long tail and short tail keywords

easy to update website

short tail keywords examples

long tail keywords and short tail keywords

6. GOOGLE MY BUSINESS

If local customers and traffic are important to you, Google My Business is a must-have SEO tool. As the name implies, this tool will help your audience find you when they turn to Google. These details show up on the right-hand side of a search page and help to bring your business to the top. It also brings in a personal aspect to your business by allowing you to add company photos of your business, portfolio highlights and behind-the-scenes content. Plus, it is a phenomenal tool when creating a testimonial or review process.

Did you know that a review process can be an important SEO tool for your small business? Relevant and recent reviews tell Google that you are an active business and an expert in your specialty. Meaning that Google will start to give you more authority and credibility; allowing you to rank higher on search engine pages. If you don't have a review process in place, we suggest you start now by using this SEO too: Google My Business!

7. GOOGLE PAGESPEED INSIGHTS

Did you know that if your page takes longer than 3 seconds to load you've lost 53% of mobile users? That is exactly why page speed is a ranking indicator that Google uses to determine if your website is worthy of page one. Curious what your page speed is? Check out Google Pagespeed Insights and make sure to look at both desktop and mobile performance. Many times our website is not optimized for the mobile experience. Because of that, you could see a huge increase in page speed which can significantly affect your website performance and traffic.

The good news is that this SEO tool gives you step-by-step instructions on how to increase page speed and optimize your website. This is a great task to add into your HoneyBook

workflow 2-3 times a year so that you continue to improve your website's page speed as you add new content.

8. YOAST WORDPRESS PLUGIN

This final SEO tool for small businesses is our best friend when it comes to blogging. It's currently only available as a WordPress plugin. There are free and premium versions and the free version is still phenomenal for anyone looking to up their SEO game. Once you've chosen your SEO keyword using the tools above, you can plug that keyword into Yoast and start writing your blog content. Yoast will then tell you if you've used the keyword enough times and help you write your SEO title, meta descriptions and URL slug. This SEO tool is our go-to blog-checker to make sure we are writing content that is optimized for search engines to give us the best chance of ranking on page one!

These 8 SEO tools are perfect for any small business owner, whether you are an SEO expert or a beginner. Plus, they are all completely free!

Bookmark these tools, jump into HoneyBook and start crafting your SEO workflows today. These SEO tools will help you rank higher, drive more traffic to your website and help you reach your SEO goals with ease. When you incorporate an organic search strategy into your business, be prepared to see long-term results. The magic of organic SEO is that even a well-written piece of content from years past can continue to drive traffic, sales and new leads for years to come.

ABBEY OSLIN AND COURTNEY PETERSEN
Duo Collective
Minneapolis, Minnesota, USA
@duo.collective
duocollective.com
Headshot by Julie Greer Photography

Photo by Alicia Leigh Photography

SET UP YOUR WEBSITE FOR SUCCESS WITH SEO
Christy Price

You've probably heard of the Squarespace website builder platform if you've ever built a website. Many small businesses have switched to Squarespace to manage their websites without having to pay for a website maintenance plan or a website retainer package.

I'm so fond of Squarespace that I've built my entire company around it! Not only is Squarespace easy to use, but it's a solid choice for small businesses who want to leverage their site to show up in search results utilizing SEO (Search Engine Optimization).

SEO IS NOT MAGIC

First of all, SEO is not magic. It's a process for helping your website show up higher in search results on Google or any search engine results pages (SERPs). While it's true that Squarespace doesn't have all the bells and whistles of a platform like WordPress, it can be the right platform for many small businesses because it's much simpler to use and maintain.

Squarespace has some important SEO settings baked right into the platform, so you don't have to worry about setting them up yourself:

· **SSL certificates.** These are automatically generated by Squarespace, so you don't have to pay your domain registrar or another third party to ensure your website is secure.

· **Mobile responsiveness.** Squarespace offers a built-in responsive design that automatically resizes your content and images for different sized displays, providing a consistently good user experience across desktop, tablet and mobile views.

· **Site map.** Squarespace provides a site map for you, a file that lists all the pages on your site and details the relationships between them. We'll cover how to use your sitemap in offsite SEO later in this article.

· **AMP.** You can toggle on accelerated mobile pages for your blog with one click, creating fast-loading blog posts for mobile users.

- **Automatic redirects.** If you have multiple domain names for one website, Squarespace automatically redirects users to the primary domain and keeps it clean for search engines.

The most important parts of search engine optimization are keyword research and content strategy. If you do those steps well, the specific platform you're using is much less important. Squarespace sites can rank very high in search results if you follow best practices for onsite and offsite SEO.

ONSITE SEO

Onsite SEO is the process of making your website friendly for search engines. This mainly entails letting search engines know what your website is about, as well as making it easy for visitors to use.

In Squarespace, here are six specific tweaks that can have big SEO payoffs:

1. **Optimize your images.** For every image you add to your website, you want to make sure you've optimized it both for file size and file name. Images with smaller file sizes load faster for a better user experience and Google uses page load time as a ranking metric. Providing a relevant file name also helps Google understand what the image is (because it can't see pictures) and can also provide additional context about your website.

   - **Pro Tip:** Remember to set alt text (alternative text) so search engines and anyone using a screen reader can understand what your images represent.

2. **Set your site titles and page titles wisely** and use your keywords. These titles, along with site and page meta descriptions, let Google know exactly what your website is about.

3. **Use Heading Tags** to feature keywords and to help make your page more readable and scannable.

4. **Keep your site tidy.** Delete or disable any pages you don't want search engines to find.

5. **Regularly update your website** with valuable content. A blog is great for this!

6. **Redirect any updated URLs**. Squarespace makes it easy to pass on an old page's search ranking to a new page.

OFFSITE SEO

Offsite SEO is a series of actions you take outside of your website to boost your ranking on SERPs by showing your authority and popularity. Offsite SEO is independent of the website platform (so you should take these steps whether you are using WordPress, Squarespace or another website builder) and works hand in hand with onsite SEO to make your website easier to find.

Here are four simple ways to get started with offsite SEO:

1. **Verify your website** with Google Search Console and Bing Webmaster tools, letting those search engines know your site exists and encouraging them to crawl it.

2. **Submit your sitemap** to Google and Bing. This helps search engines understand your site structure and makes sure they don't miss any pages.

3. **Register your website with Google My Business.** This helps your visibility in local search results and I've found that as I receive and respond to reviews there, it helps my overall SEO as well.

4. **Get backlinks and traffic to your website.** If other sites link to your site, that's essentially a vote of confidence for your website. Pages with a higher number

of inbound links tend to have higher search rankings. Start by sharing your website pages on social media and getting listed in directories and then consider other ways to get backlinks, like guest blogging opportunities. If you use HoneyBook, you can embed your contact forms directly on your website, then share that link with prospective clients for an additional traffic boost.

SQUARESPACE SEO

Squarespace SEO (as any website's SEO) is only as good as the work you put into it. If you have a basic understanding of SEO or you are willing to learn, Squarespace can perform very well in SERPs and help your website rise to the top of the crowd. Squarespace is a great choice if you're looking for a website platform that you can edit and update yourself.

Want to make sure you're setting up your Squarespace website for success? Click here to join my mailing list and receive a Squarespace Pre Launch Checklist, the same checklist I use when I launch client sites.

CHRISTY PRICE
Web Designer
Austin, Texas
@christypricewebdesign
christyprice.com
Headshot by Alicia Leigh Photography

WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW ABOUT SEO AS A FREELANCER

Hanson Cheng

Standing out as a freelancer takes more than just having the right skillset. With over 1.1 billion freelancers in the world[1], you need to have a smart way to drive more eyeballs to your services. Creating actionable Search Engine Optimization (SEO) content is one of the effective ways a freelancer can market their services and get inbound leads.

Whether you're a freelance content writer, web designer or you help clients with Amazon product photography, SEO is a cost-effective way to drive leads and land new clients through search engine traffic. Additionally, creating optimized content for clients is a great way to position yourself as an expert in their industry.

Before we get down to the nuts and bolts of SEO, what exactly are some of its major benefits for freelancers?

· It is a very effective way for driving organic traffic to your site.

· It can help drive more visibility and leads to your sales funnel.

· Clients sometimes prefer hiring freelance SEO writers that understand how search engines work

Now that we have that out of the way, here are some of the things you should know about SEO as a freelancer.

CONDUCT KEYWORD RESEARCH

Coming up with random topics to write on without keyword research like starting a journey without a map—it's very easy to get lost. On the other hand, conducting keyword research allows freelancers to have a better insight into what their target audience is looking for on search engines.

There are a lot of tools you can employ to conduct simple keyword research. Some of these tools are:

· Keyword Everywhere

· Ahrefs Keyword Explorer

· SEMRush

· UberSuggest

With these tools, you can see the estimated search volume for a keyword. Not only that, you can use them to uncover new keywords, their traffic potential and how difficult it is to rank for them. This information also serves

as an indicator of the level of relevance and how competitive your seed keyword is. Most keyword tools will also suggest keywords related to your seed keyword.

Generally, doing keyword research gives you more info about your target market and how you can create content that is relevant to them.

AVOID KEYWORD STUFFING

According to Google Central Search, keyword stuffing "refers to the practice of loading a webpage with keywords or numbers in an attempt to manipulate a site's ranking in Google search results." And in the past few years, keyword stuffing is a popular black hat tactic that many use to get their content ranking on faster.

However, while this tactic used to work, search engines have gotten smarter in detecting keyword-stuffed content. Not only that, keyword stuffing can harm your site ranking which makes it counterproductive in the long run.

When creating content, it's important to avoid:

· Repeating keywords or phrases more often than it's natural

· Using keywords that are obviously out of context

· Overusing block of the same keyword

When you stuff your blog post with keywords, you're prioritizing search engine robots over human readers. As a freelancer, you need human readers to consume your content with the hopes of converting them to clients.

In general, keyword stuffing creates a bad user experience because they are hard for human readers to understand. With a bad user experience, you risk sending potential customers away from your site.

GUEST POST ON NOTABLE PUBLICATIONS

Most times, freelancing revolves around marketing a product or service to a certain audience. Writing guest posts for top publications in your industry will do a lot of good for your career as a marketer. Other than that, guest posting has a lot of additional benefits.

· It mirrors your level of expertise to prospective clients.

· It enhances your website's SEO authority.

· It is a great avenue to reach out to new audiences.

· It is one surefire way to build credibility.

· Guest posting helps you generate organic traffic and build links to your website. You can add a relevant link from your website in your guest post.

To get started, come up with a list of notable publications in your niche that accept guest posts. It's preferable if these publications have high domain authority. Get accustomed to the kinds of posts they publish. Is it a how-to blog post, listicle or review? Before pitching your ideas, take note of posts that performed really well on the site you're guest posting by using BuzzSumo or Ahrefs.

Pro Tip: We're always looking for great content from the community to highlight on the Rising Tide blog. Share your expertise and submit a post for consideration.

OPTIMIZE YOUR IMAGES FOR SEARCH ENGINES

Image optimization is as important as writing content. Blog posts and website content with images make your content more engaging to your readers. Additionally, adding context to your images makes it easy for search engines and humans to understand them better.

According to Google, you should consider the following when adding images to a webpage:

· Provides additional value

· Relevancy to the page you're adding them

· Place image near relevant text

· Use descriptive image titles, filenames, alt text and captions

· Create a good URL structure for your images

· Optimize your image for speed. You can use image optimization software like JPEG-Optimizer, Optimizilla and Optimole.

It is also important to use copyright-free images on your website. If you have the bandwidth to create your images, you should do so. However, if you don't have the resources to do so, you can always opt for royalty-free images on sites like Unsplash, Pixabay and Pexels.

CREATE HIGH-QUALITY CONTENT

Different factors are contributing to quality content and one of them is readability.

It takes 10 to 20 seconds to capture a reader's attention. If your content is so hard to read, readers will leave your site for another website that has done a better job making their content

easy to consume. By creating content that is readable and user-friendly, you're encouraging your audience to spend more time consuming your content. It's also a great way to increase your time on the page, which is an important ranking factor.

And when they stay for long, it helps your content rank higher. You can achieve readability by making use of shorter sentences, correct punctuation/spelling, bullet points, headings and smaller sentences/paragraphs. Tools like Grammarly and Hemmingway Editor can also improve your readability.

Quality content must also be engaging. Engagement boils down to building up an emotional connection with your audience. One way to do that is to identify their pain points and come up with a feasible resolution at the end of the content.

UTILIZE INTERNAL LINKS

Internal links are hyperlinks that direct users to pages of the same domain. This should not be confused with external links that link to pages of other domains. When you are strategic with the way you utilize internal links, it improves the chances of your content ranking higher. Also, it's a great way to encourage readers to spend more time on your website.

Freelancers should always note that Google locates, indexes and has a deep-rooted understanding of pages linked on the web. Consequently, this is one of the major reasons why content with internal links ranks higher than the ones without.

Now that you are familiar with internal links, here are some of the things to take into consideration before using internal links:

· Add links that are relevant to the source content.

· Use a decent amount of internal links

- Natural links improve the level of engagement. Therefore, add links that are natural to the reader.

CREATE LONG-FORM CONTENT

Ordinarily, you'd think people don't like to read lengthy content. But the reverse is the case. The truth is long-form content tends to rank higher on Google. This claim was backed by SerpIQ in a study that indicated that the average content length of the top 10 search results was over 2,000 words.

The thing is, Google understands the user's plight. Users won't like to search for content bit by bit on different pages. They like to have everything on a single page. When you look closely at top-ranking long-form content, they possess every bit of information and data on a particular subject.

However, long-form content won't guarantee that you'll be ranking on the first page of Google. It takes more than word counts. Your content has to be valuable to the reader. It has to provide in-depth information and answers to the reader.

UNDERSTAND SEARCH INTENT

What is search intent? And how can it improve your SEO? Search intent is the motive behind every search inquiry. Google prioritizes content that understands and fulfills a search intent. When you vet content on the first page of a search, you will realize they take note of the search intent to the letter.

Let's say we enter "How to make pancakes" on Google. The top search result will be recipes that include "how-to videos" and blogs. Not e-commerce pages or a brick-and-mortar pancake restaurant. As a freelancer, you need to create content that matches your audience's search intent.

If you're creating a piece for your target audience, make sure it provides an in-depth answer to their pain point. Doing so will increase your chances to rank better on search engines.

However, search intent is not always as easy to spot as the pancake example above. Here are some types of search intent to enrich your understanding of how you can align your content with search intent.

- **Commercial Intent:** Searchers with commercial intent are looking for a product but are yet to make final decisions. An example of this kind of search intent looks like this: "Why should I hire a freelance designer?"

- **Transactional Intent:** Here, the searcher is in the decision-making stage of the buyer's journey and is ready to decide on a product or service. Transactional intent looks like this: "Best Webinar Software" or "Best Video Marketing Tools"

- **Informational intent:** With this intent, the searcher is making inquiries about specific information. This inquiry often starts with what, when, who, where and how. It could be "when did women start voting in England?" Or "how many countries are in Eastern Europe?"

- **Navigational intent:** The intent behind a search tends to be navigational when the searcher is looking for a page or website. Searchers with the navigational intent search for pages like "Twitter login" and "Reset Gmail password."

ENSURE YOUR PAGE LOADS FAST

When it takes forever for your site to load, it frustrates users and has adverse effects on ranking. Page speed has been a ranking factor on the web (since 2010) and mobile devices (since 2018). Apart from that, it plays a significant role in higher conversion rates, lower bounce rates, engagement and longer visitor duration on site.

One of the factors that affect the speed of a page is the image size. Heavy image files can make your page slow. You can fix this by compressing the image to reduce the size. Also, free tools like Google PageSpeed Insight, GTmetrix and WebPage Test can be used to check your speed page.

WRAPPING UP

With everything that has been said here, I hope you have picked one or two SEO tips to employ when writing your next strategy or piece of content as a freelancer. However, when it comes to SEO, consistency is the key. Creating one or two pieces of content optimized for SEO can get you to the first page of search engine result pages or lead to streams of inbound leads.

HANSON CHENG
Founder
Freedom to Ascend
www.freedomtoascend.com

HOW TO USE SEO TO INCREASE YOUR CONVERSIONS

Claire Bough

When thinking about SEO, most business owners focus on the traffic it brings. Watching your website traffic grow is a great indication of overall business growth. But while a boost in organic traffic and visibility can bring you better brand recognition, it's also important to translate that traffic into action.

Developing an SEO strategy that drives conversions is one of the best ways to create a steady flow of leads. Unlike other marketing efforts, SEO is something that you can watch grow over time and eventually see the biggest ROI (return on investment). Instead of relying on a budget, you can work on improving your SEO as long as you have the time and resources to create and optimize content.

One great way to think about SEO is as a two-way communication tool. While your audience searches for information and resources, you can be there to answer their questions and provide what they need. That way, it's easier to keep the relationship moving once they land on your website. With the right strategy in place, you can convert visitors to leads and nurture them into

clients. The trick is to make sure you're on the same page as them—and ideally, that's the first page of Google!

MAKE IT EASY FOR YOUR AUDIENCE TO FIND YOU

Before you can focus on conversions, you need to make sure your ideal clients are finding you online. Tailor your content to the specific needs that you can help solve with the services you offer. The further your content is from your business objectives, the less likely readers will be ready to convert.

One great way to develop targeted content is to think about your current or past clients' pain points. Then, conduct keyword research to identify how people are searching for solutions online. Focus on longer-tail keywords to begin creating content that's highly relevant to both you and your audience. These searches are typically longer and more specific—they may have lower search volume, but they tend to offer greater business value.

As you create content, you can also use a traditional marketing funnel to help determine which topics are more likely to bring in visitors and lead to conversion. Your outer funnel topics include information relevant to your audience, but there may not be a direct correlation with your services.

For a business coach, a blog post about staying focused while working could bring in traffic from relevant audiences, but it may also include readers who aren't business owners. While this type of content is still valuable for brand awareness and traffic, make sure it links to more inner funnel content that can drive readers toward your services. A blog post about staying focused could link to other posts about developing goals as well as downloadable content to help readers plan their time. Through linking to more actionable content, you can make sure your outer-funnel content is still valuable.

CREATE A SEAMLESS USER EXPERIENCE

Once a visitor lands on your site, a poor experience can quickly turn them away. On the other hand, an excellent experience can lead them to explore your site and convert. One part of creating a good experience is relevancy and authority, while the other part includes interaction.

When it comes to authority, you want to make sure your content makes sense for your business. While relevance is important for SEO, it also signals to readers whether or not they should trust you. For example, a web designer creating content about fitness coaching wouldn't seem trustworthy to either search engines or readers. Continuity between your content and services creates a better experience and your visitors will more likely have the mindset to convert.

In creating a great user experience on your website, also consider how visitors will interact and explore. Perhaps they want to learn more

about the same topic that pulled them in. Does your blog have a navigation menu and search bar they can easily use? Especially if they want to learn more about you and your services, it shouldn't take more than a few clicks to contact you for more information.

Focusing on technical SEO improvements will also improve your user experience, ultimately helping to increase conversions. Google does a great job of understanding what causes users to bounce off a web page, so these improvements are equally beneficial for user experience and SEO:

- **Mobile optimization** - Make sure users can have the same experience on mobile and desktop. Check for responsive design with images and elements like forms, videos and graphics.

- **Page speed** - Check your page speed often to make sure you have fast loading times. While many different factors can affect your page speed, some common fixes include optimizing images, cleaning up JavaScript files and removing unnecessary plugins.

- **Broken links** - Broken links might cause frustration because they can prevent users from finding the information they need. Set up URL redirects to new or relevant pages.

OPTIMIZE CONTENT ACCORDING TO AUDIENCE BEHAVIOR

Once you've published your content, SEO can help you determine how to optimize for specific conversions. Say you've published a guide about digital marketing, but you log into Google Search Console and notice it's starting to rank and pull in traffic for the keyword "Instagram advertising ideas."

Chances are, social media advertising is already a part of your guide, but now you know that it would be valuable to add more to that section to help meet your audience's needs. Including

a CTA that mentions Instagram advice can also move your visitors to convert into leads.

Optimization may look different from page to page. But in general, if you have a piece of content that's doing well, you should make sure it includes your target keywords throughout. Keep in mind that this doesn't mean you should keyword stuff wherever you can. Instead, just make sure the main topic and subtopics are included naturally in headings and your meta information. Also consider if there's new, timely information you can add to your content to help readers even more.

As you're reviewing the content on your site, pay attention to the SEO metrics below to help guide your optimization. With free Google Analytics and Google Search Console accounts, you can gather all of the following data:

- **Impressions** - Content that receives a good amount of impressions without clicks means it's showing on search pages, but people still aren't interested. Optimize by changing the title or description to capture your audience's attention.

- **Traffic and click-through rates** - Pages that get the most traffic or clicks are a great place to start optimizing for conversions. Do these pages have clear call-to-actions (CTAs)? If so, try improving the design and copy.

- **Time on page and bounce rate** - Some of your pages might get a significant amount of clicks, but visitors leave after just a few seconds. Usually, this is a sign that your page experience needs improvement.

- **Keyword rankings** - Continue to check audience search behavior through keyword rankings, which can help you determine how to edit and optimize your content. You can monitor keyword rankings for free through Google Search Console.

Pro Tip: Even if your content is already ranking, don't assume it'll stay that way! Be sure to use

the metrics above to continually revise and update your content with new keywords and relevant information.

PAIR SEO CONTENT WITH CLEAR CALLS TO ACTION

Whether you're publishing new or optimizing old, your SEO content should have conversion goals that you can move visitors forward through CTAs. When your content aligns well with your services, the CTAs are a natural next step for your visitors.

Include one primary CTA on each page that's associated with the conversion action you want visitors to take. Avoid competing CTAs like multiple buttons near each other–it shouldn't be confusing for readers to understand what to do next once they read your content. If your primary goal is to gain leads, embedding simple contact forms is an easy way to allow your visitors to contact you and enter your pipeline.

Before your contact form, you can include a value proposition that aligns with your content. For a digital marketing guide, call readers to

book a consultation about how to improve their marketing strategy. As long as your content is aligned with your business goals, your readers will enjoy the opportunity to reach you directly.

CTAs can also include banners, buttons and in-text links leading them to different pages of your site. Your CTAs should always be relevant to your content's main topic, either helping readers learn more or reach you for additional help.

HOW TO TURN TRAFFIC INTO PAYING CLIENTS

Using SEO to gain traffic is just the beginning of a broader strategy to help gain new leads and clients. Make the most out of your SEO by moving visitors into your booking pipeline in a way that's as frictionless as possible.

Instead of using a "set it and forget it approach," think of your content as a tool you can continue to optimize and leverage. Using the HoneyBook contact form, you can capture all the information you need for lead nurture. Once the form is embedded on your site, it syncs directly with your HoneyBook project pipeline, helping you see the types of leads that come from your content and what services they need.

With a tool like HoneyBook that manages your entire client experience, you can capitalize quickly on the new leads that come in and begin to cultivate new relationships. With data that shows all the lead sources from your contact form, you'll also be able to track your SEO efforts and see how well your content is generating interest.

The next time you're developing SEO-focused content, consider the entire user journey from Google to your inbox. By maintaining a conversion-focused view, SEO can become one of the most valuable tools for gaining more qualified, paying clients.

CLAIRE BOUGH
Associate Content Marketing Manager
HoneyBook
Austin, Texas
@honeybook
www.honeybook.com

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1   What makes your website search-engine-friendly?

2   How will you approach keyword research moving forward?

3   What keywords will you start targeting in your business?

4   How do you plan to improve your search engine rankings?

5   How will you measure SEO success in your business?

RISING TIDE | HONEYBOOK BLOG POST

KENDRA SWALLS
Five SEO Tips for Building a Strong Online Presence

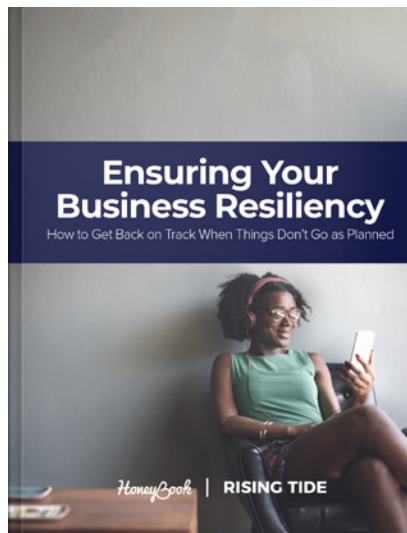**LAUREN DRAGON-COOK**
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WHO WE ARE

The HoneyBook | Rising Tide team believes an empowered creative economy will change the world. By elevating the voices of creatives, sharing their stories, and building a thriving online and offline community, we support creatives in their pursuit of a sustainable livelihood.

Empowerment begins with saving creatives time and money. HoneyBook helps creative entrepreneurs manage their businesses more efficiently so they can do more of what they love. With HoneyBook, creatives can send brochures, proposals and invoices; create the ideal customer experience; and track payments – all in one place. Equally as important are sharing knowledge and providing support. That's why Rising Tide is a community and living library of educational resources, including blog content from thought leaders, monthly guides, online summits, and over 400 monthly meet-ups across the world to help creatives succeed in business.

We're also passionate about supporting the communities around us. To date, we've given over $130,000 to nonprofits including Pencils of Promise, The School Sessions, U.S. Dream Academy, The Birthday Party Project, Thirst Relief and more. We've also partnered with Pencils of Promise to build a school in 2018 funded entirely by community donations through our 2017 RISE Summit.

We believe that magic happens when creatives gather, support one another and are empowered to pursue their passions. We believe in community over competition. We believe in empowering the creative economy to rise together.

Photo by Oliva Reed