

Solidifying Your SEO Strategy

Lessons Gleaned From Industry Experts



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Introduction

Just before the turn of the century, an agency used the term “search engine optimization” in their marketing materials [for the first time](#). In 2003, [a Wikipedia page](#) explaining the meaning of the term first appeared, and it’s been a staple in the lexicon of digital marketing experts ever since.

Put simply, search engine optimization (SEO) is any process of improving the quality or quantity of traffic to a website or page via a search engine.

What used to be a little-known strategic niche is now the topic du jour, as digital agencies and marketing experts the world over battle over the top Search Engine Result Page (SERP) spots for high-value keywords within their industries.

While SEO can be difficult due to its many moving parts, there are plenty of tools and recommendations you can use to inform your strategy, many of which have been discussed in blog posts, articles, and resources across the web.

Although plenty of literature exists on this topic, marketers and developers are often left to wonder which pieces of advice are truly pertinent to their overall strategy.

To help site managers and creators make more informed decisions regarding their SEO strategies, [WP Engine gathered a host of SEO experts](#) to share their advice for improving your strategy and climbing through the search engine rankings.

We’ve compiled all that advice—including research recommendations, content creation tools, considerations for special scenarios, and technical tips—within the pages of this ebook.

Use this guide to make sure your strategy is agile enough to keep up with the ever-changing landscape of SEO.



Getting Started

When you first enter the wide world of search engine optimization, there's a lot to consider.

It's important to take your time and understand that SEO is not a short-term play—making small changes over months and even years will help you climb the ranks, grab a top spot, and maintain it.

However, before you start downloading and installing SEO tools, it's also crucial to understand how you've achieved your current ranking and define a workable strategy you can use moving forward.

Understanding SERPs and Your Current Ranking

In the vast digital landscape, search engines are your gateway to everything else on the web, including prospects, clients, and potential customers.

When users enter a query, a search engine rapidly sifts through billions of web pages to present relevant results. These results are then presented on what is aptly known as a Search Engine Results Page or "SERP."

SERPs display results that best match the query entered into search engines such as Google, Bing, and Yahoo. These pages feature both organic listings and paid advertisements, and most users will end up clicking one of the results found on the first SERP because these results are, according to the search engine, the best possible match based on the query.

Every search engine will have a slightly different algorithm for deciding how you rank. For example, [Google's criteria](#) will differ somewhat from [Bing's Webmaster Guidelines](#). To optimize your site, knowing which search engine is driving most of its traffic is essential.

In many cases, it will be Google, but for other sites, the answer might surprise you, especially with regard to international audiences.

“Different projects have very different starting points. Check where the audience is coming from and also where any sales or conversions are coming from. That is a good direction when you’re asking yourself where you need to start.”

Erika Varangouli

Head of International Brand
[Semrush](#)



For example, [Naver](#) is the second most popular search engine in South Korea, claiming more than 35% of the local market share. From an eCommerce perspective, the [TikTok Shop is expected to triple its market share in Southeast Asia](#) this year, jumping from 4.4% in 2022 to about 13.2% by the end of 2023.

Knowing which search engines are being used by your audience will help you decide which ones to optimize for.

Organic Search Rankings

While various search engines use different criteria to rank pages for specific queries and keywords, there are two tried-and-true methods for working your way to the top of page one: organic SEO and pay-per-click.

If you’re using SEO to help your content rank organically, you’ll need to take into account the following factors:

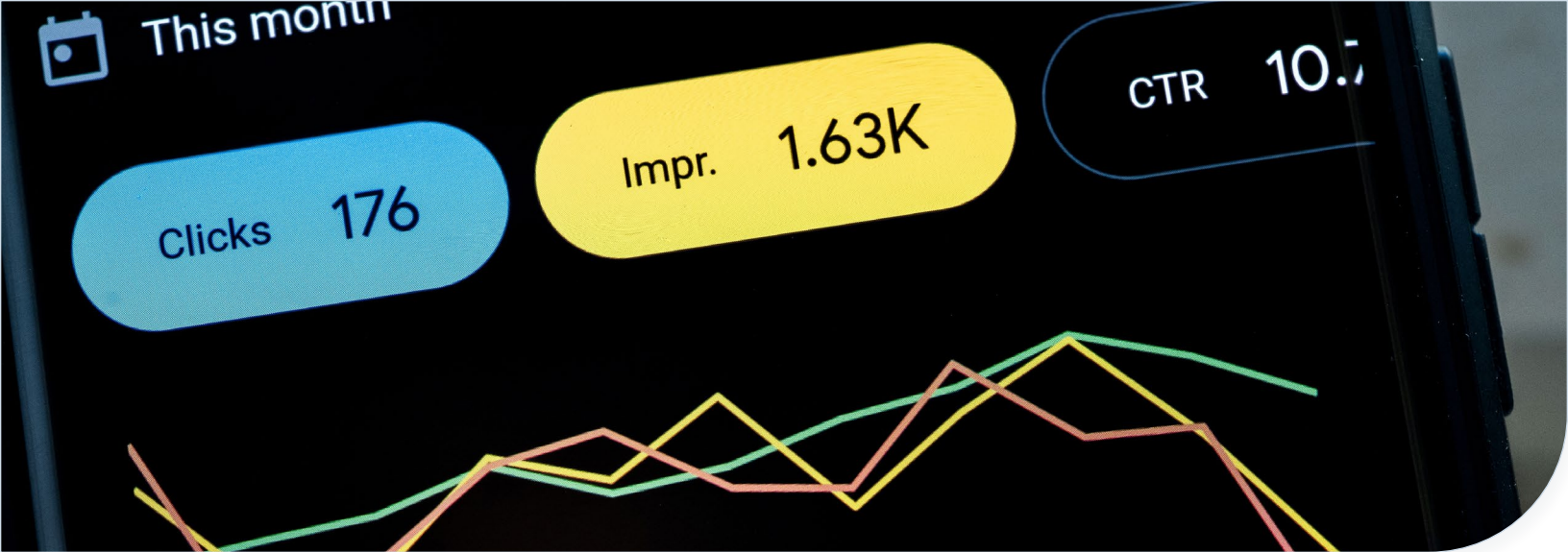
Backlinks: Search engines see and index all the reputable websites related to a specific keyword or query, so when your content links back to other sites that have already been deemed credible, it elicits a vote of confidence from the search engine.

Content Relevance: Search engines crawl site content to analyze its quality and relevance in relation to specific keywords. Using relevant keywords within your content and optimizing it to be highly informative will help drive more clicks and improve your rankings.

Social Signals: Remember that search engines are ranking content to be consumed by people. So, creating engaging content from a human perspective—by prioritizing things like social media interactions and displaying star reviews submitted by real users—may indirectly influence your search engine rankings by making your content more appealing to the end user, incentivizing more clicks.

User Experience: One of the most important aspects of your SERP ranking will be the convenience of the overall user experience. Do your pages load quickly enough? Do they show up well on mobile devices? Does your URL structure make sense? Anything that negatively affects your user’s experience will almost certainly affect your ranking similarly.

Remember, though, that growing your organic search visibility is likely to be a slow process, especially for frequently searched keywords that others within your industry are also targeting.



Pay-Per-Click (PPC) Rankings

Pay-per-click is a marketing tactic in which advertisers bid on high-value keywords, and those with the highest bid have their ads displayed at the top of the SERPs when a user searches for those keywords. Then, if a user clicks on the page, the advertiser pays a fee.

There are a few benefits to PPC, the main one being immediate visibility. Because PPC places you directly at the top of the page (sometimes just below the best-ranked organic results, sometimes above, depending on the search engine), it helps you reach your target audience quickly and effectively when they're in the midst of their search.

The level of control over your campaigns and the ability to measure your results through the PPC platform you use efficiently are also beneficial to marketers who choose PPC.

However, there are also some drawbacks to consider.

The first is cost. While PPC can be a great way to get your name in front of the right people, it can quickly become expensive, especially if you're targeting highly competitive keywords and your ad starts moving lots of traffic to your site. Because of this, it may not be a sustainable long-term plan.

Additionally, ad blockers can get in the way of reaching your audience, and a lack of organic content accompanying your sponsored content can make some users uneasy, signaling that your credibility relies on paying to play instead of having the best resources.

While PPC can be a helpful tool when you're getting started or if you're pushing a specific campaign, search engine optimization is the long-term strategy required to back all your other efforts. It will help boost your organic credibility and achieve sustainable traffic levels without too many additional paid measures.



Defining Your Strategy

How you define your SEO strategy will depend on several factors, like the level of brand recognition you already have and where you're currently ranked. Defining a smart long-term strategy will take plenty of collaboration between marketers and developers, as both parties will need to come together to set goals and create internal processes that serve those goals before dividing and conquering the work ahead.

Some initial steps you'll need to take when defining your SEO strategy and completing an audit of your site's performance will include:

1. Initial assessment and keyword research:

You can only figure out where you're going if you know where you've been. So, the first step of your strategy should be taking stock of your current performance. You'll choose the tools you wish to use (we'll talk more about SEO tools later on) and start tracking as soon as possible, to get an idea of how your site is already performing and where you might make some improvements.

2. Defining goals and objectives: Marketers and developers should collaborate to establish the primary objectives of their SEO strategy. Some goals teams commonly strive for include increasing organic traffic, improving

specific keyword rankings, enhancing the user experience, or driving conversions. Setting specific, measurable, achievable, relevant, and time-bound (SMART) objectives is essential to track progress effectively.

- 3. On-page optimization:** While it sounds like a lot of work (because it is), combing through your site page by page to optimize for SEO is a powerful way to improve search engine rankings. Include target keywords in meta titles, meta descriptions, heading tags, alt text, and the on-page content. It will do wonders for your rankings—and don't forget to check for any additional updates you can make to improve page loading speed, mobile responsiveness, and overall website usability while you're there.
- 4. Content strategy:** Developing valuable and relevant content is crucial for SEO success. Marketers must research and plan content ideas that align with their target audience's interests and intent (use the high-value keywords you've already researched to inform your content decisions) before developers can implement the technical elements required to optimize content.
- 5. Technical SEO:** Technical SEO involves optimizing a website's technical elements to enhance search engine visibility and site

indexing efficiency. Common tactics include optimizing site structure, fixing broken links, improving XML sitemaps, creating schema markups, implementing canonical tags, and ensuring proper redirects to avoid the dreaded 404 error. We'll dive into these tactics more fully in the [Getting Technical](#) section.

6. Local/international SEO: For businesses targeting specific audiences, implementing a local SEO strategy is crucial. Marketers should identify relevant local keywords, claim and optimize Google My Business listing, and ensure the website provides consistent NAP (Name, Address, Phone) information. For international and multilingual audiences, this could also involve working with locals to translate terms and phrases for a specific region.

7. Link-building strategies: Backlinks provide opportunities to gain credibility by sharing your company's name and content across other reputable websites. Marketers can contact relevant companies within their industry to ask about opportunities to publish guest posts from their teams or include links to their sites within their content.

8. Ongoing monitoring and analysis: Both developers and marketers should regularly monitor their SEO performance using tools like Google Analytics, using the data to benchmark your progress over time. This allows you to see if your strategy is working and adapt it as needed.

Through the collaborative efforts of their combined expertise, marketers and developers can create a comprehensive SEO strategy that effectively boosts the website's visibility, traffic, and user experience.





Content Creation

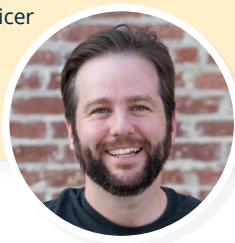
Your content plays a crucial role in your search engine rankings. Search engines crawl your content to see how relevant it is to your audience's queries, so creating highly informative content that provides the answers your users are looking for will help you climb the ranks and soar to the top of the SERPs.

"Always aim to exhibit expertise with your site and never compromise content quality to get there. If you can be unique and differentiated, that's gonna come through in the success of your site, regardless of how you set it up, the way it's structured, or anything in between."

Jeff Coyle

Co-founder & Chief Strategy Officer

[MarketMuse](#)



Use these tips to create high-quality content that positions your brand in the best possible light.

Using Keyword Research to Inform Content Creation

The keyword research performed by your team will ultimately inform the content you create as a part of your SEO strategy. While you may have focused on uncovering high-value keywords, don't dismiss the possibilities that lower-value keywords present.

Because these terms are searched less, they are less competitive, making it easier to rank for them. Once you're ranking well for a handful of low-value keywords, you can turn your attention to more competitive terms, and you'll have more authority under your belt, thanks to the work you've already done with lesser terms. A well-rounded SEO strategy includes targeting a mix of high and low-value keywords to target every segment of your audience and maximize your organic traffic.



Low Value Keywords: less competition, long-tail keywords often achieve higher conversions, greater growth potential



High Value Keywords: broader reach, targeting middle-to-low funnel prospects, drive more traffic

It's also important to understand what terms your high-ranking competitors are targeting if you want to meet them at the top of the SERPs. Tools like SEMrush, Ahrefs, and Moz all offer competitive analysis features you can use to see what your peers are doing and what pieces of content are driving their success. Understanding what others are doing well will help you identify gaps and opportunities within your own content to make it more relevant to your audience.

Outsourced, In-house, and AI Content Creation

When you're outlining your content strategy, the most important consideration to account for is where the content will come from. In this scenario, businesses generally have two choices: outsource their content creation or hire an in-house writer or team of writers to get the job done.

Outsourcing Content Creation

Outsourcing can be an excellent option for smaller companies that lack the in-house resources or expertise to produce high-quality content quickly and consistently. In these instances, a third-party professional content creator can provide a fresh perspective and a writer's expertise—plus, they'll take the strain off your internal teams.

When choosing a writer to outsource your content, find a reputable creator with a track record of producing compelling content. Sites like

[Fiverr](#), [Proofed](#), and [Upwork](#) are great places to start your search. Remember: you get what you pay for, and there are better options than the cheapest.

Even when you hire a talented writer, they may need to gain additional expertise in your industry. So, it's also important to ensure there is someone within the organization who is responsible for regularly auditing your content. They can watch out for common issues like:

- ⚠ **broken links**
- ⚠ **incorrect information**
- ⚠ **inconsistent brand voice**
- ⚠ **irrelevant/unauthoritative links**
- ⚠ **misspelled product or service names/tiers**
- ⚠ **plagiarism**
- ⚠ **poor readability**

Having someone within your organization who knows your business and the industry well is invaluable when editing and refining content submitted by an outside professional.

Creating Content In-house Using AI

Outsourcing can be an excellent option for If you choose the in-house route, there is a straightforward way to simplify your content creation efforts. Artificial Intelligence (AI) tools are revolutionizing the way writers approach content creation.

Generative AI tools like ChatGPT can help writers brainstorm ideas and even generate a first draft of their content, providing a shot of adrenaline to what could otherwise be a slow-going operation.

However, it's important to note that while AI tools can help jumpstart the content creation process, taking content directly from an AI source and publishing it on your site is not wise.

Human input and editing will always be necessary to ensure content accuracy and readability. Only a seasoned writer can take the often more-generic content churned out by a generative AI tool and edit it so it best engages your audience, boosts your SEO, and aligns with your brand's tone, cadence, and messaging house.

Think of AI tools as your creative assistant, not a replacement for human content creators.

The Art of the AI Prompt

The real skill you'll need to utilize AI tools properly will come in the form of crafting your prompt. Only a great prompt will yield the high-quality generated content you're hoping for.

For writers and content creators looking for assistance in creating the best possible prompts for AI tools, consider the following:



Be clear and specific: Think of an AI tool as if it were a brilliant toddler. You'll have to give specific instructions if you want precise results. So, in your prompt, you'll want to include details that may seem trivial to you, like the desired content length, format (e.g., a listicle vs. a long-form article, etc.), tone of voice (e.g., formal and professional vs. casual and friendly, etc.), and more. This will help the tool better understand and create exactly what you're asking for.



Provide context and background information: If you're rewriting existing content or you've found an example of content you'd like to mimic, include those examples in your prompt. Any guidelines you provide (such as asking the tool to include keywords you're targeting or specific products you offer) will help it generate the best possible response.



Keep security in mind: While tools like ChatGPT can be highly useful, they're also public, and the information you share on them is not necessarily safe from prying eyes. Therefore, it's advisable not to share private or proprietary information on public tools to avoid compliance issues or privacy concerns.



Narrow the focus and reiterate: If your prompt results in a response that seems too broad, feel free to narrow the direction of your prompt and ask the tool to regenerate the results. You may have to re-word and resubmit a prompt multiple times before getting the results you're looking for.



Specialized SEO Considerations

SEO strategies should differ based on the website's target audience and type. For example, a small local restaurant serving a specific city will have different requirements than a multi-national chain of restaurants serving an international audience.

Similarly, an eCommerce website that sells and ships products will need a different strategy than a business or family of brands utilizing a multisite.

Use the following insights to optimize your website with these special considerations in mind.

Optimizing Local SEO

When localizing your SEO strategy to a small geographic area—think a single city, state, or province—it becomes even more crucial to focus on delivering content that resonates with the individuals in that area.

You'll want to start by conducting local keyword research. While ranking for broad terms—even high-value ones—will be helpful, incorporating location-based keywords into your content, meta tags, and headings can help improve visibility within a specific area.

Similarly, you should create content that's highly specific to your target area.

Whether you publish a blog, create a specific landing page, or share news, events, images, and stories based on your target community, it will help attract more local visitors to your site. Seek backlinks from relevant partners in the area—like local organizations, businesses, or influencers—to further bolster your local credibility, and make sure to tailor your social media presence by following and tagging local accounts in your posts and stories.



Google My Business

Claiming and optimizing your [Google My Business](#) listing is another meaningful way to boost your localized SEO visibility.

Make sure the information listed about your business—like your location and hours of operation—are all accurate, add relevant category tags so users know about your products or services, upload high-quality images to enhance your visual storytelling, and encourage your customers to leave reviews so that other potential visitors can get a complete picture of what you do and how you can help them.

If users do leave reviews, make sure to respond to them in a timely manner, whether good or bad. While you may be tempted to get rid of negative reviews, you'll build more rapport with your audience by publicly and authentically responding to a customer's grievances. Doing so shows you're willing to hear your customers' concerns and rectify mistakes.

Schema Markup

Implementing local schema markup on your website is one of the most effective ways to boost your local SEO presence. Schema markup, sometimes called structured data, is a type of microdata that enhances the page descriptions shown on search engines.

This enhanced description is called a "rich snippet," and it can include anything from cook times for recipes to movie times for local theaters to star ratings for specific products. Rich snippets are a way to give potential site visitors more information than a typical SERP result would offer.

Optimizing your schema markup to include the time and location of local events or even just the name of the city you're targeting can have a massive impact on the number of visitors and quality of leads your site attracts.

With all of these pieces in place, you're in an excellent position to dominate your local SEO and drive more traffic to your site.

Optimizing International SEO

Optimizing your site for an international audience is similar to optimizing for a local audience, just done on a larger scale. Think of each country or region you serve as a unique local audience and optimize accordingly. Then, you might drill down even further, localizing content for specific territories or cities within a country to most effectively target your audience.

For example, entering "WP Engine" into your Google search bar will typically lead most users to results about our headquarters in Austin, Texas.

However, we also have international offices in other cities worldwide, so, as an example, your search will provide results for our London office if you live in England. In Australia, you'll get results for our office in Brisbane. This happens because our team has optimized our site for an international audience.

Think of each area you're targeting as its own local SEO project, and then use the suggestions above (like updating your schema markup and creating localized content) to optimize your pages for an international audience.

The following includes a few additional measures you can take to improve your international SEO strategy.

Hreflang and Canonical Tags

Hreflang in the site's HTML indicates to the search engine which language and country each page targets. For an international audience, this helps search engines serve up the most relevant and optimized version of your content based on each user's location and language preferences.

As an example, here's what your code could look like if you're targeting English, Spanish, and Mandarin Chinese-speaking users with different versions of the same page:

```
<!DOCTYPE html>
<html>
<head>
  <title>Your Page Title</title>
  <!-- Other meta tags, stylesheets, and scripts -->

  <!-- Hreflang Tags for Language and Region Targeting -->
  <link rel="alternate" hreflang="en" href="https://www.example.com/en/page" />
  <link rel="alternate" hreflang="es" href="https://www.example.com/es/pagina" />
  <link rel="alternate" hreflang="zh" href="https://www.example.com/zh/页面" />

  <!-- Canonical Tag -->
  <link rel="canonical" href="https://www.example.com/en/page" />
</head>
<body>
  <!-- Your webpage content here -->
</body>
</html>
```

Here, hreflang="en" targets the English-speaking audience, hreflang="es" targets the Spanish-speaking audience, and hreflang="zh" targets the Mandarin-speaking audience.

Then, the canonical tag indicates the preferred version of a webpage when multiple versions exist. This way, search engines understand that one version should be treated as the primary page and that the other versions serve the same purpose but should not be considered duplicate content, which could otherwise hurt your rankings.

In the example above, the primary version of the webpage is the English version, so that's the page that search engines will focus on crawling for rank relevancy.

Enlist Local Help

Make sure to get an outside perspective on your efforts by working with local professionals for your target audience. They can help you create and manage the localized content and social media presence you'll need to curate to gain relevancy.

"It's really valuable to get people who are local, who are natives, who know marketing, and who have experience in your industry, to review your content. I've seen plenty of sites where the localization has been great, but then the trust signals are off. Like prices are listed in the wrong currencies, or there's no information about deliveries or returns—and all of those things play a huge role in how people convert."

Erika Varangouli

Head of International Brand
[Semrush](#)



You'll want someone local to double-check your local schema markup, backlinks, NAP citations, and keywords to ensure everything looks, sounds, and feels completely natural to the local audience. Plus, a local partner can help suggest the most appropriate geotargeting preferences.

Tools like [Google Search Console](#) allow you to specify the country or region your website intends to serve so that Google can rank your site more accurately for users in that area.

Working with a web host that offers servers near your target areas can help provide the fastest load times possible, and WP Engine's Agency Partner Directory can help you find localized regional help.

Optimizing eCommerce SEO

In addition to the strategies we've discussed above—like schema markups and unique content creation—there are a few other ways SEO professionals can use their skills to drive traffic on eCommerce websites.

Conversion Rate Optimization

By A/B testing elements on your site, you can see which CTAs, layouts, and product images are most helpful in maximizing your conversions.

The process starts by taking stock of your current conversion rate, then making small incremental changes to your site and product pages to see if those changes increase conversions, decrease conversions, or have no effect.

"It's not enough just to get people to your site from organic, they have to convert, too. It's an eCommerce site. They want to make money—that's the whole point of the site."

Jamie Reedy

Senior SEO Specialist
[Amisive Digital](#)



Start by identifying the current behavior of your users and the specific action you want your users to take. That action could be making a sale, signing up for a newsletter, joining a subscription program, or something else entirely. The behavior you'll want to track includes identifying high-traffic pages, user entry and exit points, and user journey paths to pinpoint areas you can improve.

After you have that information, it's time to hypothesize what's causing your current conversion rate. For example, improving your product descriptions could improve your conversions. Limit the changes you make and test simultaneously, as you'll want to know which change is responsible for any increase or decrease in your conversion rate. If you make fewer changes at once, it will be easier to pinpoint which is responsible for the changes to your conversion rate.

Then, it's time to set up your A/B or multivariate testing. Tools like [Optimizely](#) or [Google Optimize](#) can help you compare the performance of your different page versions to see which performs better. Additionally, surveying your audience or using [heatmap](#), [session recording](#), or [click-tracking](#) tools can help you understand how users are interacting with each version of your page.

Once you're confident you know which version performs better, it's time to implement your edits, whether it be simplifying forms, enhancing visuals, refining copy, improving the user experience, or some combination of those elements.

Product Feed Optimization

Enhancing how your products appear on SERPs can help boost your sales and get more eyes on your website. One way to improve your listings is by using schema markups, which we covered in the [Optimizing for Local SEO](#) section.

Another way to improve your product listings is through [product feed optimization](#), which refers to enhancing your product listings with specific shopping search engines—like [Amazon](#), [Google Shopping](#), or even the [TikTok shop](#)—in mind. Optimized feeds include accurate product information (e.g., titles, prices, descriptions), keywords, and high-quality images that entice users to click your listing.

Because WooCommerce is the most popular solution for [WordPress eCommerce websites](#), we recommend [Product Feed Pro for WooCommerce](#) or the [Yoast WooCommerce SEO](#) plugin for optimizing WooCommerce product listings.

For WordPress users who aren't using WooCommerce, [Feedonomics](#), [DataFeedWatch](#), and [Channable](#) are great tools that will be useful no matter what eCommerce solution you're using.



Optimizing Multisite SEO

Multisites present a few unique challenges from an SEO perspective. Because each site within the multisite shares the same database, themes, and plugins, traditional optimization methods can get muddled quickly.

A multisite structure makes it even more important for SEO professionals to watch for duplicate content issues (using hreflang and canonical tags or creating unique content for the different audiences your multisite serves can help you avoid these problems).

And because the site structure is more complex, managing and maintaining a consistent structure becomes even more vital to the overall user experience, which is a massive factor in your SERP rankings.



Optimizing Multisite Structure

The structure of your multisite will heavily impact the overall efficacy of your SEO strategy.

Whether you choose to use subdomains or subdirectories, a well-maintained URL structure is one of the best ways to help search engines understand your content and appropriately rank your site.

Subdomains and subdirectories dictate the way your URLs appear to visitors. So, if you have a multisite network called mymultisite and set it up to run on subdomains, the URL for a site called mysite would appear as mysite.mymultisite.com.

If you chose to use subdirectories instead, the same site on that network would appear as mymultisite.com/mysite. Both subdirectories and

subdomains serve the same purpose, but you can't mix the two. Once you've chosen your preferred structure, you have to stick with it.

There is no right or wrong answer when choosing whether to use subdomains or subdirectories, but there may be a better choice based on the intended application. Subdomains are considered better for isolating individual sites within a multisite network. They're useful to maintain distinct content and user bases, keeping your branding separate across each site instance. Subdirectories, on the other hand, are more suitable for a multisite network that needs unified branding and shared resources.

Additionally, you'll want to create and maintain your XML Sitemaps for each site within a multisite network to help search engines understand the network structure and index pages accurately.

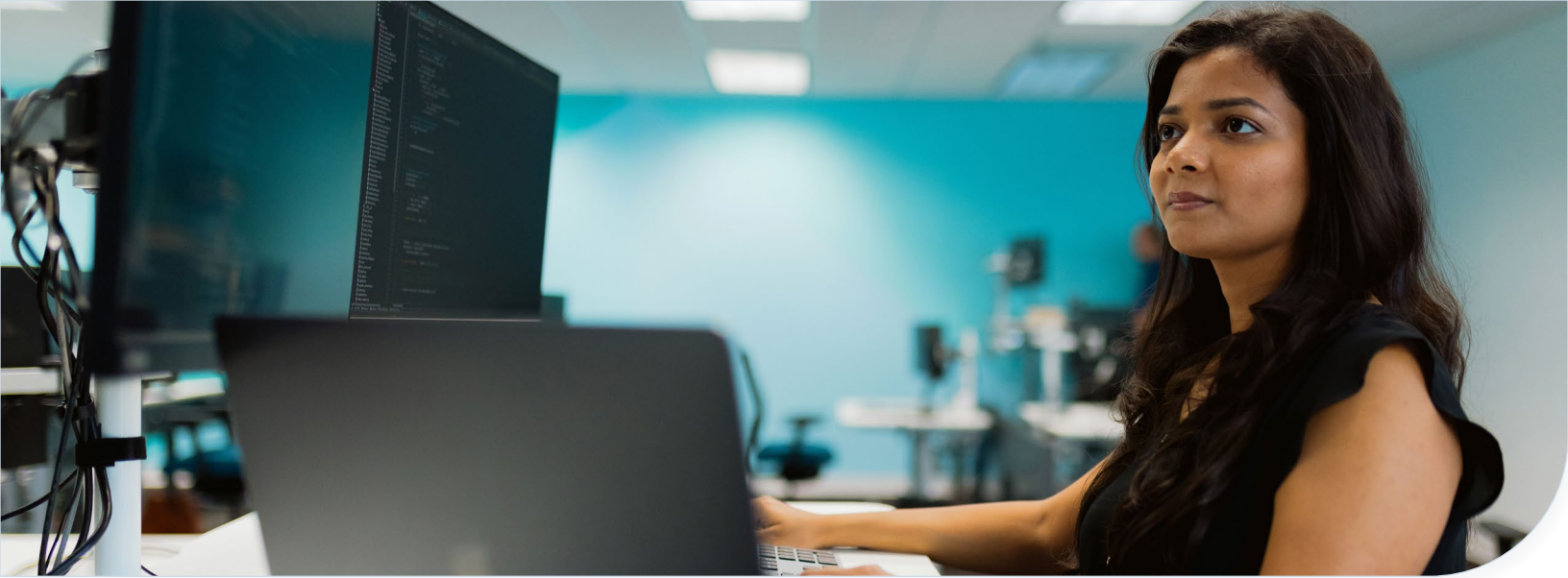
Choose Multisite-specific SEO Tools

Because of the more complicated structure of multisite networks, you'll want to use tools that can handle that complexity.

[All in One SEO Pack](#) provides multisite-specific SEO features that can help you manage titles, meta descriptions, XML sitemaps, and more across the entire network.

The [Yoast SEO plugin](#) is another popular SEO plugin with multisite support, offering similar features to optimize individual sites within the network. And as long as you have a WordPress multisite network activated, you'll [only need one subscription](#).

Finally, [Google Search Console](#) can help you monitor the performance of each site within the network, check indexation status, and resolve any identified crawl errors when you [connect it to your multisite network](#).



Getting Technical

When you're getting down to the technical brass tacks of your search engine optimization strategy, there are seven major elements to consider. Each provides an opportunity to measure your site performance or communicate more clearly with search engine crawlers.

"Constantly keep an eye on technical SEO. Mistakes can happen—we're all humans—and oftentimes, those mistakes can bring down your rankings or cause some fluctuations. It's always good to keep a keen eye on things when there's lots of changes happening on your website, especially when you have multiple teams that may not be communicating with each other."

Steffan Hernandez
Associate Director of SEO
[Power Digital Marketing](#)



To help you get technical with your SEO, we've outlined the seven most important elements of a technical SEO strategy below.

Core Web Vitals/Google PageSpeed Insights

Core Web Vitals are key metrics used to measure your site users' experience when they land on a page. Google PageSpeed Insights then uses these metrics as a way to assess the overall usability of your site.

The three metrics tracked by Core Web Vitals are [Largest Contentful Paint](#) (LCP), [First Input Delay](#) (FID), and [Cumulative Layout Shift](#) (CLS).

FCP measures the time it takes for the largest content element (such as an image or text block) to become visible to users. A good LCP score means your page elements load in under 2.5 seconds.

FID assesses interactivity by measuring the time it takes for a user's first interaction (like clicking a button) to receive a response from the website. A low FID score indicates a responsive site that encourages user engagement.

CLS evaluates the visual stability of your pages. By quantifying unexpected layout shifts during page loading. A low CLS score means that content elements remain steady as the page loads, preventing frustration for users.

Image Compression

Compressing the images on your site reduces their file size, which helps speed up your site without sacrificing the quality of the visuals. Because faster site speed improves the overall user experience, compressing your images or introducing lazy loading for images and videos can help boost your SEO performance.

On-page Optimization

You can make some simple on-page adjustments to optimize your site for better SEO performance. These include ensuring your internal links to other pages on your site are relevant and working properly and that your title tags, meta descriptions, and alt text for images all include important keywords you hope to rank for.

Off-page Optimization

A little bit of outreach can go a long way. A solid backlink strategy involves reaching out to other key players in your industry or within the geographic area you're targeting and asking them to link to your relevant content on their website, and in return, you can link back to them within your content as well. This helps improve your

authority in the market by indicating to search engines that your content is worthy of a backlink.

Robots.txt Files & noindex Rules

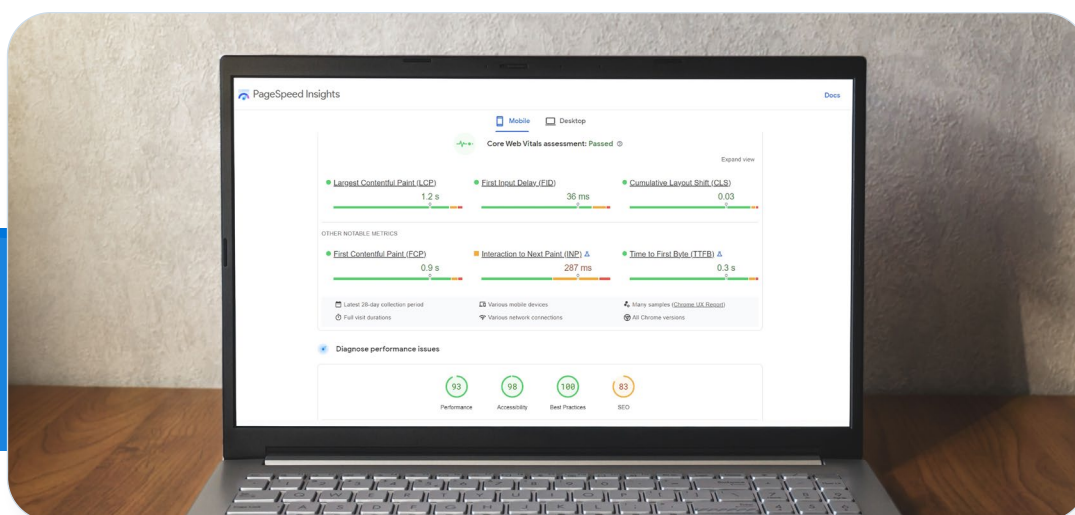
A [Robots.txt file](#) guides search engines, letting them know which parts of your site to crawl and which to avoid. This will help ensure your server isn't overwhelmed by requests from Google's crawler, but make sure you're not relying on a robots.txt file to block pages from Google—it should only be used to mark high-priority vs. low-priority pages. If you want to block a page from crawlers entirely, you'll want to use a [noindex](#) rule.

Schema Markup

[Schema markup](#) helps search engines understand page context by creating rich snippets. Search engines use the rich snippets to display relevant information about your content, which ultimately incentivizes more clicks, enhances the user's search experience, and can improve your site ranking as a result.

Sitemaps

As we discussed in the Optimizing Multisite SEO section, sitemaps list all the pages on your site, helping search engines understand the hierarchy of your content as they index your site.





Practical Applications for Your SEO Strategy

Once you've exhausted your planning and strategy sessions, there's only one thing left to do: Start implementing your ideas and tracking the results to see what works! SEO isn't an exact science, so there will be some trial and error involved in the implementation process.

The following sections will outline tools and resources recommended by the SEO professionals we interviewed during [WP Engine's SEO webinar series](#), as well as tips for teams of all sizes.



Tools to Use

The following tools were recommended by SEO experts featured in WP Engine's [SEO webinar series](#). While we don't recommend using all of these tools at once, we do recommend trying a handful of them to see which group of tools works best for your sites.

- [Ahrefs](#)
- [All In One SEO \(AIOSEO\)](#)
- [Botify](#)
- [ContentKing](#)
- [DeepL](#)
- [Google Analytics](#)
- [Link Redirect Trace](#)
- [Loom](#)
- [Lumar](#)
- [Majestic](#)
- [MarketMuse](#)
- [Oncrawl](#)
- [Onscrapr](#)
- [OptinMonster](#)
- [Polylang](#)
- [Quattr](#)
- [RankMath](#)
- [Seerobots](#)
- [Screaming Frog](#)
- [Semrush](#)
- [SEO writing assistant from Semrush](#)
- [SEO Meta One Click](#)
- [SEO Pro](#)
- [SEOquake](#)
- [SiteBulb](#)
- [Webpagetest.org](#)
- [Yoast](#)

Resources for Continued Learning

These resources for continued SEO education were also suggested by the experts featured in our SEO webinar series.

- [Aleyda Solis SEO Website](#)
- [How to Conduct a Content Audit: Secrets Learned from Crawling 100,000+ Sites](#)
- [Lily Ray](#)
- [Search Off the Record SEO Podcast](#)
- [SEO FOMO Newsletter](#)
- [Stacked Marketer Newsletter](#)
- [The State of Search](#)
- [The State of eCommerce](#)



Tips for Small & One-Person Teams

Small SEO teams and large ones with multiple stakeholders should approach their SEO strategies differently.

“One of the first things we ask people is: Are you going to manage your SEO yourself as a one-person team or are you going to hire an agency to do it? And if you’re going to manage it as a one-person team, is that one person only doing SEO, or are they going to be wearing multiple hats? Even more important, if you’re going to hire an agency, do you have somebody inside your organization who can implement the recommendations of the agency?”

Andrew Sherman

Founder

[Virtual Window](#)



For small or one-person SEO teams, climbing the SERPs can seem like an impossible battle—just one against the millions of other teams vying for the coveted top spot.

In these cases, your planning and prioritization are even more critical than for a larger team with more people able to divide and conquer. Prioritize tasks based on their potential to impact your rankings and how simple they are to tackle.

Focus on simple tasks with a high potential for positive impact first. These include updating meta tags and checking links across your site. Then, when that’s finished, move on to more complicated or time-consuming tasks.

As you’re working, you’ll have to remain flexible and adaptable. Taking time to read the latest SEO news and trends is a massive part of your ongoing strategy, so try not to feel guilty if you take time away from the active process of making updates for a passive activity like watching a webinar or reading an article. Everything you do will add to the positive strides you’re making.

Remaining consistent in your efforts and having the patience to work on a long-term strategy will also be crucial to your success. Rome wasn’t built in a day, and your SEO improvements won’t be either.

Organic growth can be a slow process, so don’t get discouraged if it takes a while for the fruits of your labor to ripen fully. Stay the course, and you’ll start to improve your rankings in no time!



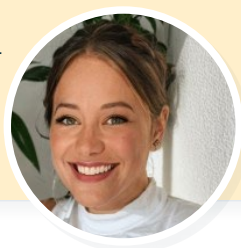
Tips for Large Teams

Larger teams, with five or more individuals working together on an SEO strategy, benefit from many hands making light work. However, this is only possible if you all work toward a common goal. Communication among your team members is crucial to your success.

"We're often collaborating across the organization. We get input from the Wordpress development team, the website strategy team, brand, communications, and oftentimes even some external resources or agencies."

Erin Myers Vidal

Lead Digital Strategy Manager
[WP Engine](#)



Everyone on your team should understand which keywords are top priority, secondary priority, and low priority. Then, you'll be able to divide and conquer your strategy.

You can do so by ensuring everyone on your team has a specific role they're fulfilling for your SEO strategy. Here are some suggestions for potential roles on your SEO team:

- ⊙ **SEO Manager or Director:** This person oversees the entire strategy, helping to set goals and coordinate efforts across the team.
- ⊙ **SEO Strategist:** Sometimes called a content strategist, this is the person who drives your keyword research, prioritizing high-value and low-value keywords and working with your content creators to plan topics
- ⊙ **Content Creator:** This person is responsible for turning keywords into content, working with the strategist to plan what topics get covered, and ensuring it results in high-quality, well-written blogs, articles, and on-page content.
- ⊙ **Technical SEO Specialist:** This individual will handle all your site audits to identify and fix crawl issues, optimize your site structure, and ensure all the technical aspects of your site align with best practices. They may work with other developers to optimize the user experience as well.
- ⊙ **Link Building Specialist:** This role is sometimes absorbed into the Technical SEO Specialist or Content Creator role. They work to find backlink opportunities, build relationships with relevant sites, and manage outreach campaigns.
- ⊙ **Data Analyst:** This role is sometimes covered by the SEO Strategist, Technical Specialist, or even the SEO Manager. They're tasked with monitoring the improvement or decline of important metrics, tracking keyword rankings, and providing data-driven insights to help refine your strategy.
- ⊙ **Social Media Coordinator:** We've mentioned the importance of social media already—the person in this role is tasked with monitoring your social channels, sharing important content, and engaging with the audience through replies to comments, messages, and online reviews.
- ⊙ **Local or International SEO Specialist:** Whether you're targeting a local or international audience, this person can help manage local citations, optimize your Google My Business listing, and enhance local search visibility.

- ☺ **Conversion Rate Optimizer:** This person may work with a UX Specialist or the Technical SEO Specialist on your team to analyze user behavior, optimize conversion paths, and improve ROI.

These are but a few of the unique roles that may work together on larger teams as they plan and implement their SEO strategies. Divvying up your tasks can ensure that every aspect of your strategy is covered, and regular meetings with the whole team will ensure that all your efforts align with your strategy.

Conclusion

It's not fun to imagine worst-case-scenario There you have it—the tips in this comprehensive guide can help you straighten out your SEO strategy and start climbing the SERPs.

Watch our [SEO mini-series](#) to get advice straight from our panel of experts, which includes professionals from digital marketing agencies as well as individuals who help create and manage some of the very tools and resources we've mentioned in this guide.

Because a great SEO strategy hinges on a lightning-fast site, make sure to choose a hosting partner that can keep your loading times low and your bounce rate even lower. WP Engine is a top choice for WordPress builders who want to take the stress out of their hosting to focus on more important things—like creating a solid SEO strategy.



About Our Experts

WP Engine gathered a panel of experts to take part in [a series of short webinars on the topic of SEO](#). Their insight informed much of the information in this guide.

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About WP Engine

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Want to learn more about our Agency Partner Program and the industry-leading benefits that set agencies up for continued success?

Speak to an Agency Expert

Find Out More