

Author Directions: Navigating your success with SEO & Discoverability



Introduction

Search Engine Optimisation (SEO) and discoverability aren't just technical jargon to make your head spin, they are crucial concepts to an active online presence. SEO is defined in *Marketing the Basics* as 'optimizing web pages to ensure they appear in the top 10 results of search engine indexes for specific keywords'. Therefore, it is critical that keywords and customer understanding are in place when creating content.

Discoverability refers to the ease with which users can discover content. For example, if someone types *Sustainable Engineering for Generation Y author interview* into Google, where does your content appear? Anything past the first half of the results page, let alone the second page, is rarely seen. If you can understand SEO and therefore discoverability, your content will be seen more often, which, in turn, will positively affect the sales of your book.

Six Questions to Ask Yourself:

1. What mediums should I be using?
2. But why bother?
3. Terms to consider?
4. Where do I begin?
5. What should I bear in mind?
6. What elements do the best web pages have?

What mediums should I be using?

In our Author Direction snapshot **Navigating your success through Discoverability & Advocacy**, online presence is covered, specifically looking at creating a website, emails and newsletters, and social media. There are also more focused snapshots on **Social media guidance** and **blogging**. To find out more about those areas of interest and our other snapshots please visit: www.routledge.com/go/author-directions-navigating-your-success

But why bother?

According to **statista.com**, there were 4.2 billion active internet users by October 2018, suggesting the amount of content that is produced daily. Therefore, if you create content it needs to be targeted and given the best chance possible to be seen by the relevant audience, and not just lost in the mass of content readily available at the click of a button. If you take time with your SEO the probability of your content being seen by its intended audience will improve and transpire into impressions and therefore engagement with content or purchases of your book.

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Helpful terms to consider

- Impressions:** The number of times content is viewed by individuals.
- Bounce rate:** The number of people who leave the page without searching for further content or making any purchases.
- Time on page:** The amount of time the individual stays on your page before exiting, which will indicate how engaged they are with the content
- Top pages:** The pages which are gaining the best views
- Keywords:** Words assigned to key ideas and topics included in the content you have or are creating, making it easier for a search engine to find the content you have made.

Where do I begin?

The good news is many programs are built with SEO in mind. For instance, if you are creating an accompanying website for your publication using www.wordpress.com, it already has inbuilt categories and keyword formatting to make your job easier. Although this layout is helpful, it doesn't suggest which keywords to use, you must decide that yourself.

To do this you need to consider what the audience will be thinking when they look for your book or webpage. For instance, if your book is entitled; *Sustainable Engineering for Generation Y* you need to consider what your book covers, and who it is for.

Ben Howes, a Content Marketing Executive for Taylor & Francis gave us an insight into what he does when considering his intended audience;

Your post should be tailored to specific user intent, in that it should aim to provide information that answers a specific question, deals with a problem, or provides a service. The question, problem, or service you are providing/dealing with should be obvious to you and should be made obvious to your readers. If upon reading your post you do not feel that it is answering the intent of your users, then you should consider re-writing.

Not only does this need to be considered when thinking about the keywords you are assigning to your content but the formatting of the content itself, Ben continues;

In addition to this, you should keep in mind the reading and knowledge level of your intended audience; there is no point writing a 10,000-word post with a **Flesch-Reading** score of 20 that is aimed at children.

In the example of *Sustainable Engineering for Generation Y*, some keywords you might consider would be millennial engineer, sustainable engineering. If you are at a loss to what might be

appropriate, Ben suggests going to **SEMRush** and **ahrefs** if your budget permits, or some free tools which also carry out relevant searches are **Ubersuggest** and **Google Keyword Planner**. However, Ben does point out that;

The scope of my keyword research is entirely dependent on whether I have already decided on the topic of my post, or whether I am going to use keyword research to inform the topic of my post. For instance, if I knew I was going to write a post about 'the difficulties of collecting reliable qualitative data from surveys' then the scope of my keyword research would be quite narrow; focusing on extracting keywords related to this specific topic.

In contrast, if I only had a basic idea of my post topic I would search more broadly for keywords. For instance, I might know I want to write about 'qualitative data', however, the exact topic is still undecided. In this case, I would search broadly for keywords, paying careful attention to their respective search volumes, and use this to come up with topic ideas and to inform on as to whether users are searching for this topic.

Here Ben is suggesting there are two approaches you could take when collecting keywords depending on if the topic is very niche or if it is broader. Just remember to consider what you would put into Google, if you were the one looking for the content you have created.

What should I bear in mind?

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As Heinze mentions in *Digital and social media marketing: A results-driven approach*, appearing at the top of a google search isn't easy. Major search engines and social networks keep their algorithms a secret and frequently change them, making it near impossible to hack the system. Therefore, small changes in the algorithm can mean that where your content ranks in a search engine one day may differ to the next, however, this will not be very noticeable to the untrained eye, as they still want their search engine to be effective.

Heinze also mentions how it is crucial to avoid breaking any SEO rules and creating **Black Hat SEO**, which Ben defines as;

... the practice of increasing the visibility of your website on search engines using methods that violate the search engines' terms of service. The most common methods implemented include the purchasing of links, hidden text, and link farms.

This practice could result in penalties. If you are concerned it is always best to check the **Google Webmaster Guide** and the **Bing Webmaster Guide** which covers best practice. However, as Ben suggests,

...it is very unlikely that you will implement any 'Black Hat' practices without knowledge that you are doing so. By simply avoiding any emails or schemes which promise 'thousands of backlinks' for a small fee or offers to 'link to my content if I link to yours.

Heinze warns of some common ways to cause yourself to miss out on discoverability when not taking into consideration national or regional cultural differences. This can affect the appropriateness of the language used across a global medium like the internet, for example, language that is widely recognised in British English may be unrecognisable in American English.

What elements do the best web pages have?

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Inserting links to external and internal content will affect your level of discoverability. For instance, referencing any other work you may have done in the past such as interviews, will cause your page to be more dynamic and appealing.

If you are concerned about a backlog of broken links or you have a large audience, you may want to consider testing your webpage on sites like Screaming Frog which will crawl your page like a search engine and find any broken links, duplications or faults.

Considering if the links you have added to your page are safe and reliable is imperative and directly correlates to the discoverability of your page, Ben suggests;

There are a few ways to discern whether a third-party websites information is reliable. Firstly, you can use your own knowledge, if you are writing a post on a certain topic then it is likely that you are knowledgeable on the topic and can determine the credibility of a websites content.

Secondly, you can compare the content of a few sites, if all the sites contain similar content then it is likely that this content is credible and correct. Lastly, you can look at how many sites link to this content using a backlinks checker (such as ahrefs), if lots of good quality websites link to this content then it is almost certainly credible.

Therefore, when adding hyperlinks and third-parties to your content it is important to consider if they are reliable, real and relevant.

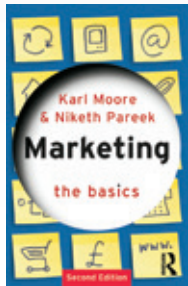
Conclusion

Taking the time to engage with SEO can have an overwhelming impact, with \$65 billion being spent on SEO in 2016 alone (Borrell Associates in SEJ, 2018). It can elevate your content from being viewed by friends and family after posting it on Facebook, to being found on a Google search by a member of the public. If you are new to the idea of building your own content, then use sites such as www.wordpress.com that are set up with new users in mind. Take the time to sit down and play with new programs and keyword tools to see which best suit your way of working. If you find that the keywords you have input aren't having the desired effect, then edit them and compare your results. You are managing the content and could have the ability to increase your visibility by following this simple guide.

Acknowledgments

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References



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Helpful Links

Black Hat SEO information:

<https://blog.hubspot.com/marketing/black-hat-seo>

Key Word Tools:

<https://ahrefs.com/>

<https://neilpatel.com/ubersuggest/>

<https://ads.google.com/home/tools/keyword-planner/>

<https://www.semrush.com/>

Best Practice Guides:

<https://support.google.com/webmasters/answer/35769?hl=en>

<https://www.bing.com/webmaster/help/webmaster-guidelines-30fba23a>

Relevant Author Snapshots



Navigating your success through Discoverability & Advocacy



Author Directions: Navigating your success in Social Media



Academic Blogging: Why Should I Blog and Where Do I Start?