

SEARCH  
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OPTIM

***Do I Need to Care  
About SEO?***

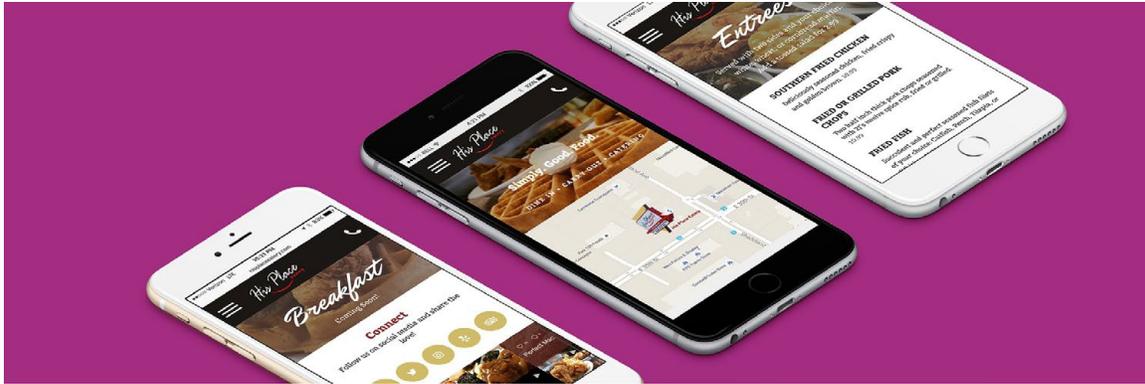
# IF YOU FOUND YOUR WAY HERE, LIKELY YOU HAVE HEARD THROUGH SOMEONE, SOMEWHERE THAT YOU NEED TO IMPROVE YOUR SEO.

But, what is SEO, why does it matter, and how does it work? The topic of search engine optimization can be a lot to digest, so let's get started.



## What is search engine optimization?

Search engine optimization, or SEO, is the process of improving your rank in search engine results pages by employing tactics on and off site. There is no single defining principle of SEO as it includes factors that live on your website, links from other sites, or simply the structure of the website as discussed in the [How to Optimize a Bad Website](#) article. The point is, you simply cannot rely on one area to improve your all-around awareness and ranking. To better understand what factors come into play, let's first look at the difference between on-page SEO and off-site SEO.



## What is on-page SEO?

On-page SEO refers to anything that lives on your website. This can be the structure of the website design or the content that is organized with a beautiful website design. Each one of these impact your opportunity for improved search engine optimization.

### ***Website structure for SEO***

Most websites are built with search engine optimization best practices enforced from the start. Each tag serves a purpose for indexing some item on your website and allows search engines to crawl, or read your website. If your website is not structured properly, search engines have a hard time reading the page content and will be less likely to return your website to the user.

### ***Title, URLs, and the h1***

One of the most important on-page SEO factors is your titles, URLs, and h1 tags. A page title is the main headline of your search result. The h1 iterates a phrase and helps the search engines understand the main purpose of the content. Traditionally, URLs will follow the title of the page, for example, an Indianapolis Digital Marketing page would be .com/indianapolis-digital-marketing, but this is not required.

### ***Do Meta descriptions matter for on-page SEO?***

Though a meta description is not a factor in search engine rank, it does allow users to determine if the result is related to their search. Think of this as your ad copy that is aimed at attracting customers. Each page should have unique meta descriptions and entice the user to click.

## ***On-page content and SEO***

The content contained on a page makes up a major factor in search engine optimization. Search engines like Google are smart enough to know when a site is likely to have reliable content and when it is far left from the search query. A search engine scans the information on the page to see if it best fits the user's search. If the page has SEO-friendly structure and the content is thorough and chock-full of keyword-rich text, the search engine will favor the site with a higher rank. This is where proper content strategy comes into play. But, we will get into that later.

Now that we have an understanding of on-page SEO, let's discuss off-site SEO.

## **Why is off-site SEO important?**

Off-site SEO plays a big role in improving your search engine rank. Think of off-site search engine optimization as anything that does not live on your website. Mainly, links pointing back to your website. In the digital marketing world, we use local listings, social profiles, and various partnerships to build strong backlinks to a website.

### ***What is a backlink and why does it matter?***

A backlink refers to a link that is populated on another site and points back to your website. This can be done in a few different ways:

- Building relationships with business partners, vendors, or clients
- Press releases or earned media
- Various website listings on legitimate directories
- Contributing to your own blog and other industry related blogs
- Providing users tools to use and link on their website



Backlink can be the toughest challenge for search engine optimization, but the payoff can be huge. The higher domain authority a website has with your link, the more trusted search engines can find your website to be.

### ***Social Listings and review sites for off-site SEO***

Knowing what people are saying and being part of the conversation is important when building off-site SEO. Social media companies like Facebook and Twitter offer a great opportunity to build solid inbound links to your website and sites like Yelp and your Google Business Listing help you build a solid reputation for people searching in your location.

With the ability to share information with an audience, it is increasingly important to make sure the content you are providing is relevant and points back to your site. This will help increase brand awareness and traffic to your website. Make sure you claim your Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, Google Plus, and LinkedIn and build them out with key information and branding.

Now that we have defined the difference between on-page SEO and off-site SEO, how does one improve their search engine optimization strategy?

## **On-site SEO optimization**

Whether you are spinning up a new website or revising the old code, you will want to make sure you comb through the site and check for opportunities to maximize the structure of your website.

### ***On-site SEO checklist***

- Minimize code for faster page speeds
- Ensure your site can be crawled properly using correct structure
- Include proper subheadings and include keywords where applicable
- Include unique meta descriptions, titles, and tags on each page
- Use proper tags for each image that appear on the page
- Submit sitemaps or use plugins to do it for you



## Content Optimization

As we mentioned earlier, content makes up a huge part of your SEO opportunity. There is nothing more irritating than landing on a page that has nothing to do with the original search or is so poorly displayed it can be hard to read. Even if the content is spot on, the design can easily kill the user experience.

### ***Content optimization checklist***

- Research keywords you want to rank for and include them in your content
- Develop strategic content that is thorough and includes valuable keywords
- Make sure each post has a purpose and it is clearly defined
- Use proper title, headings, image tags, and internal links
- Each post should be easily shareable with a controlled message and featured image

# MAKE SURE YOU ARE CREATING UNIQUE, ORIGINAL CONTENT.

One of the biggest issues to avoid is duplicate content. Search engines are constantly looking for new information to index and the likelihood of indexing unoriginal content is growing slim. Make sure you are investing time into strategizing ways to make unique original content. Once you find that you have content that your audience finds valuable, you will be able to find that can become the reliable voice for your area of expertise. At this point, creating backlinks can become much easier, you just need to work for it.

If you're still scratching your head about SEO, don't worry. Shoot us an email at [hello@kicksdigital.com](mailto:hello@kicksdigital.com) and we'll get you started on the right path.