

Well, WordPress users alone publish over 2 million posts every day. That comes out to 24 blog posts every second.

That means that users published around 216 blog posts while you were reading these five sentences.

And that's only counting WordPress users. If we were to count all blog posts, that number would surely be higher.

This makes it kind of tough to stand out. But you have to if you want to make your blog a successful one.

While I often spend 4-5 hours writing my blog posts, the ten minutes I spend optimizing each post are easily the most important.

No wonder millions of people Google the term "SEO" each month.

On any given day, people conduct more than 2.2 million searches. And that's just on Google — to say nothing of the other search engines.

Therefore, showing up on the front page of Google can be the deciding factor between a business that's thriving and one that's, well, bankrupt.

But what does SEO even mean?

You probably know that it stands for search engine optimization, but what do you need to optimize?

Is it the design? Or is it the writing? Or maybe it's the links.

Yes, yes, and yes — it's all of that and more.

But let's start this SEO guide at the beginning.

Definition: SEO stands for search engine optimization. Which is the art of ranking high on a search engine in the unpaid section, also known as the organic listings.

Alright, let's translate that to English. Here's my go at it:

Search engine optimization (SEO) is the process of optimizing <https://www.webs.org.il/>

your online content so that a search engine likes to show it as a top result for searches of a certain keyword.

Let me break that down even further:

When it comes to SEO, there's you, the search engine, and the searcher. If you have an article about how to make vegan lasagna, you want the search engine (which, in 90% of all cases, is Google) to show it as a top result to anyone who searches for the phrase "vegan lasagna."

SEO is the magic you have to work on your article in order to make Google very likely to include your post as one of the top results whenever someone searches for that keyword.

We're going to dig deep into SEO, but feel free to jump to any section that interests you:

Overview

White hat vs. black hat

Cleaning inside your house and outside: on-page SEO vs. off-page SEO

On-Page SEO

Off-Page SEO

Overview

Now what does that magic look like, and why does it even matter?

Like I said earlier, the vast majority of online experiences begin with a search engine, and nearly 75% of searchers start their searches on Google.

Combine that with the fact that the first five results on Google get 67% of all clicks, and you get an idea of why search engine optimization is so important.

There's a joke going around the web that highlights how crucial it is to hit the first page of Google:

If you ever need to hide a dead body, you should place it on the second page of Google search results.

If your blog post, article, or product is on any other page of the Google search results than the first, then it's the equivalent of it not ranking at all.

But to understand how to show up first in the search engine results, you first need to know how search even works.

How Search Works:

Now that you have an idea of the basics of SEO, I'll take a look at some of its components in detail.

While Google guards their search algorithm pretty well and not all of the over 200 determining factors are public, Backlinko did a great job of compiling as many of them as possible into one big list.

But first, I need to get one thing straight. There are two sides of the SEO force, and you need to choose yours right now.

White hat vs. black hat

As you know, I'm playing the long-term entrepreneurial game instead of just trying to get a quick buck out of it.

It's the same with search engine optimization. Some people are in it to make a few grand really quickly while others are in it for the long haul.

If you want to work SEO like a get-rich-quick scheme, you'll probably end up doing black hat SEO.

This type of SEO focuses on optimizing your content only for the search engine, not considering humans at all.

Since there are lots of ways to bend and break the rules to get your sites to rank high, these are a prime way for black hat SEOs to make a few thousand dollars fast.

Ultimately, this approach results in spammy, crappy pages that often get banned very fast. It will often lead to severe punishment for the marketer, ruining their chance of building something sustainable in the future.

You might make a few grand this way, but you'll continuously have to be on the lookout for search engine updates and come up with new ways to dodge the rules.

White hat SEO, on the other hand, is the way to build a sustainable online business. If you do SEO this way, you'll focus on your human audience.

You'll try to give them the best content possible and make it easily accessible to them by playing according to the search engine's rules.

Inbound Marketing Inc. does a great job of explaining the difference.

Black vs White Hat SEO

Needless to say, you'll only hear and see me talking about white hat SEO.

Choose your side of the force wisely, young Padawan.

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Unfortunately, it's not always that easy.

As you know, life's not always black or white.

The same holds true for SEO. There's actually something in the middle of the 'white vs. black hat debate' that I need to address.

Gray hat SEO, like its name implies, is a little white and a little black.

That means it's not quite as pure or innocent as the whitest of white hats. But it isn't quite as egregiously manipulative as black hat can be.

You're not trying to trick anyone or intentionally game the system with gray hat. However, you are trying to [https://en.search.wordpress.com/?src=organic&q=search engine optimization](https://en.search.wordpress.com/?src=organic&q=search+engine+optimization) get a distinct advantage.

See, Google's standards aren't as clear-cut as they'd like you to believe. Many times, they might even say contradictory things.

For example, Google has said they're not a fan of guest blogging to build links.

But what about guest blogging to grow your brand? What if you do it to build awareness, generate high-quality traffic back to your site, and become a household name in the industry?

Those are all legitimate reasons to guest post and why I still recommend it.

Other people might disagree with me on this point, and that's OK.

That's what makes online marketing, and SEO in particular, so fun. It's a game. And two opponents can try different methods to win.

SEO changes all the time. The rules are often ill-defined.

Besides, most of what we know as 'the rules' are simply just SEOs making predictions or looking at correlating data trends.

That's why there's so much room for gray hat SEO to sneak in.

Many classic link building techniques, like using scholarships to build links, can also go either way.

Some people say it still works. Others say it's dead.

It often depends a lot on how you do it.

Super smart SEOs, like Ross Hudgens of Siege Media, talk a lot about scalable link building tactics.

All marketing tactics need to be scalable at the end of the day if they're going to generate any ROI.

But here's the problem with that notion.

Almost every 'scalable link building tactic' is borderline black hat depending on how you do it.

Ross shows examples of this time and time again where even massive brands you visit daily, like The New York Times, have built links. You could technically consider that this goes against Google's rules.

NYTimes

Now, it might be easy to build links in some industries, like technology or nutrition. There are thousands of blogs online that talk about this stuff daily.

But what if you work for a supplement company?

Did you know MailChimp won't even let supplement companies use their email marketing service at all?

How are they supposed to create connections, reach out to customers, and increase revenue (let alone build a few links)?

The same holds true in other less savory industries, like gambling for instance.

The chances of a journalist linking to your site in a flattering way are slim to none.

So many times, you're going to have to take your chances.

Law firms also find trouble with building high-quality links. That's why they often use scholarship link building tactics like we addressed earlier.



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