SIGNAL

The Simple SEO Guide for Small Businesses

Introduction

Search Engine Optimisation aka SEO or Search Engine Marketing simply means optimising your website so that it is as attractive as possible to visitors and search engines.

Of course, deliberately attempting to manipulate the search rankings is very much frowned upon by Google and other search engines. However, you are encouraged to make your website as easy to use and as well maintained as you can.

Much of what is in this guide refers to Google, which probably accounts for 95%+ of all organic search traffic coming to your website however, this guide will help make your website attractive to other search engines too.

The 4 Fundamentals

Load Speed

Https Security

Google Rankings

Mobile Friendliness

These are the 4 fundamental SEO issues to check and fix before proceeding with any of the other steps in this guide.

It doesn't matter whether you are a huge multinational business or a one man band, you have to excel at these fundamentals to have any chance of being found by your ideal target customers and converting that traffic into business.

The four fundamentals are universal and apply to every single website on the Internet. If your website is not performing well in any of these four areas then you should fix these before doing any additional search engine optimisation.

Load Speed

You love fast loading websites right? So does everyone - including your customers and Google! 'Slow sites give a bad user experience, and a poor impression of your business'

'Sites that load in 5 seconds vs 19 seconds observed: 25% higher ad view-ability, 70% longer average sessions [and] 35% lower bounce rates'

AliExpress

Reduced load time by 36% and saw a 10.5% increase in orders and 27% increase in conversion rates for new customers.
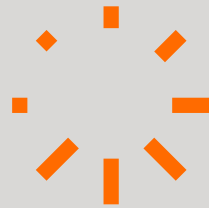
ancestry

Reduced load time by 64% and recorded a +7% rise in conversion rate.

The Telegraph

Ran tests that tried different delays to page load time and saw page views drop by 11% for a 4-second delay and 44% for a 20-second delay.

Load Speed

'The faster your website loads the better it is for your customers '

Mobify

Found that for every 0.001 second improvement in homepage load speed, they saw a 1.11% lift in conversion. Which gave them an average annual revenue increase of $376,789.

For every 0.001 second improvement in checkout page load speed, they saw a 1.55% lift in session-based conversion, which gave an average annual revenue increase of $526,147'

the trainline

Reduced load time by 0.3-seconds in their funnel and revenue increased by an extra £8 million a year.

Load Speed: Facts

47% **of visitors expect web pages to load in under two seconds.**

40% of visitors abandon a page taking more than 3 seconds to load.

**79%** **of shoppers who have to wait too long state they won't come back to purchase again.**

In 2006 Amazon reported that a 100-millisecond increase in page speed translated to a 1% increase in its revenue.

In 2010 **A page that took 6 seconds to load suffered a 40% loss in conversion.**

In 2016 A page that took 6 seconds to load experienced a 50% loss in conversion (this is only going to get worse as users expect faster load times with improvements in tech).

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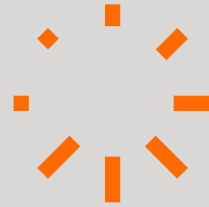
Load Speed: Test!

To test your website load speed visit: www.gtmetrix.com

This site will give you a good overview of what needs to be fixed to improve your load speed.

Some of it is likely to be quite technical and require a coder to fix, but simply optimising your images so they are as small a file size as you can make them without compromising quality will really help load speed.

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Https Security

HTTPS://

Having a secure website should be a priority for all business owners. HTTP means Hypertext Transfer Protocol (HTTP).

Why should you bother?

This is the original way that a browser connected to a server to collect data from a website.

As time has gone on and with the rise of identity theft and data security issues it is very important that connections become encrypted and made secure using HTTPS as it uses a Secure Socket Layer (SSL) or Transport Layer Security (TLS) protocol.

When a visitor comes to your website using HTTP, the data is moved from server to browser without any form of security or encryption - that means anyone monitoring the connection can "see" the data - including logins, credit card information and personal data.

With HTTPS the SSL takes data and encrypts it between server and browser so that anyone intercepting the data cannot understand what it means.

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Https Security: Facts

HTTPS://

Browsers commonly indicate security by presenting a padlock next to the address bar. Visit: www.eff.org/https-everywhere for a full run down of what HTTPS is and how to make your site compliant.

43% **of visitors abandon websites when they see "Security Alert" messages.**

40% who see a security message think that their data is at risk of being compromised.

18% **abandoned a cart because they didn't trust the site.**

"The average user's perception of a site's security is largely determined by their "gut feeling", which is to a large extent directed by how visually secure the page looks" - An excerpt from an illuminating article here:

How Users Perceive Security During the Checkout Flow (Incl. New 'Trust Seal' Study 2020)

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Google Ratings G

High ratings on Google don't just appear - you have to know what you're doing. Did you know Google actually gives you advice on how to rank higher?

Google provides a suite of tools to ensure your website has the best chance of ranking well for the search terms you want your business to get found for.

Google Search Console

Most business owners do not know that Google do this, but there are three main tools that can help you understand what is wrong with your site - technically at least.

Google Analytics

Let's look at these three tools a bit closer...

Google Pagespeed Insights

Google Ratings G

Google Search Console

Formerly 'Google Webmaster Tools', this is a very good tool for highlighting search result problems. It's the place Google communicates major issues with your website's performance in the search results.

You can use Google Search Console to monitor Google Search results for all of your websites like check indexing status to help you optimise the visibility of your websites. This data shows you everything that happens before visitors find your site.

Google Analytics

Helps you track and review you visitor stats and see how any changes you make to your site affect your website traffic. It also gives you insights into how users move around your website.

You can see the most popular pages, 'conversion events' (when someone does something like fill a form or download a file).

This data shows you everything that happens once visitors arrive at your site.

Google Ratings G

Google Pagespeed Insights

We shared a load speed test service a few pages back but Google offers another handy test that reviews your site for major technical issues and then scores your site out of 100.

As Google is using this as a comparison across multiple millions of sites, it gives you a very good idea of how your site compares to the rest of the web. If you score 20/100 then you know that 80% of websites are scoring better than you. Time to implement the tips in this guide!

Mobile Friendliness

Everyone has one in their pocket...don't miss out on prospective customers!

Think mobile-first

Mobile-first is a design approach that ensures a website is built the right way from the ground up.

Google updates the mobile index of websites most frequently, with the desktop index getting fewer updates each year. The rise in the popularity of smartphones, tablets and other mobile devices means that users are more likely to visit your website on device with a smaller screen or a less powerful device than a laptop or desktop machine (although that gap is closing fast).

If your website cannot be easily used on a small screen you are losing customers to competitors that make it easy to see their content and make purchases on a mobile.

Mobile Friendliness: Facts

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58 **is the number of times a day people check their phones with more than half of those occurring during working hours.**

3h15 is the average amount of time people spend on their phones daily.

3/4 **of the global population will exclusively use smartphones when accessing the internet by 2025.**

70% of mobile sessions are shorter than 2 minutes.

61% **of users are unlikely to return to a mobile site they had trouble accessing.**

40% who had trouble accessing a website on mobile visited a competitor's site instead.

57% **of users say they won't recommend a business with a poorly designed mobile site.**

88% of consumers who search for a type of local business on a mobile device call or visit that business within 24 hrs.

Mobile Friendliness: Tips

Improve your website's mobile friendliness with these 5 tips...

Fast loading pages

Font legibility

Marketing message

Responsivenes

Big tap targets

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Mobile Friendliness: Tips

Fast loading pages

Load speed is part of the mobile ranking factor. Make your website pages as "small" as possible in file size and ensure they load quickly.

A quick way to check your actual load speed, is to use a device that's not visited your website before - turn off the WiFi, then type in your website address and hit go. You may be surprised at how slow the page takes to load. Count aloud - if you reach 4 or 5, something needs to change!

Responsivenes

Make sure your site scales to suit both mobile and tablet screen sizes. Forcing users to pinch and scroll to read your blog or page content will not make for a good user experience.

If you have the Chrome Browser hit F12 to bring up the developer tools. Click the icon that looks like a mobile and you will get a second menu which allows you to check what your website looks like on various screen sizes for different devices.

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Mobile Friendliness: Tips

Font Legibility

Ensure your website fonts are displaying correctly and are large enough to read on screen. Here are some examples of bad fonts...

Big Tap Targets

These are areas on your website like buttons and links that allow users to interact with your content. Ensure that buttons and other icons with links are big enough for a finger to tap with ease.

Remember not everyone has the same dexterity, allowing for older and less able users to access your content is vital to remain relevant to ALL potential customers whatever age or ability.
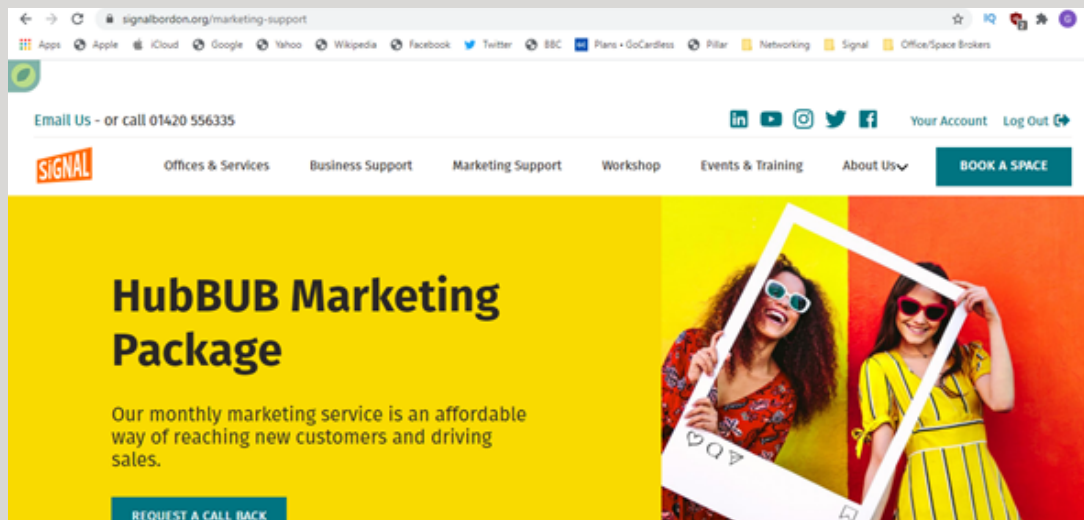
Mobile Friendliness: Tips

Marketing Messaging

Ensure your visitors can actually read your headlines in one go and don't have to scroll just to read a page headline. Make sure they can also access all the elements on your website, like form fields and logins.

To conclude...

All you have to do is follow these 4 simple steps to ensure your site visitors have a good user experience...but wait! Let us share our secret Local SEO 'Superbooster' with you!

Add your site to a popular local directory site like BiZHUB Connect

If your business serves customers who live near Bordon, why not join The SiGNAL BiZHUB and help boost your local business SEO!

Visit: https://www.signalbordon.org/join-bizhub-connect

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Final word

SEO is about continuous, incremental improvements to ensure your website meets the needs of your target audience.

Gradually revising your content, adding to it and improving it over time shows the search engines you are a webmaster who cares about your visitors and wants to ensure they have a good experience. Revisiting old content and improving it e.g. re-writing old blogs or updating with the most current information improves trust with your visitors.

If they can trust your content then your business must be trustworthy. So regular, consistent updates are better than blasting the website with a fire hose of fixes every 12 months.

Slow and steady wins the race…

At SiGNAL we provide workspaces to help you get your business off the ground and grow. From meeting rooms, offices and desk hire, we have workspaces for entrepreneurs, sole traders and micro businesses right in the heart of Bordon.

We also offer fantastic business networking events –
because who you mix with matters!

Why not check out the BiZHUB for yourself. Simply go to our events page and book onto our next event!

Find out more about SiGNAL by visiting our website.
www.signalbordon.org

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