SEO Quick Guide for Startups and Small Websites

> This is a DRAFT. See if you can follow the steps. If information is missing or unclear, let me know so I can make changes. Send me an email to andreas@andreas.com. Thanks! -- andreas

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The Goal of this eBook

- Use SEO to find the top keywords that have lots of traffic.
- Add those keywords to your page.
- Your audience can find your page in Google.

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About Me

I'm an instructor at INSEEC SF, a French business school in Silicon Valley. I was the head of Global SEO at Cisco, which included 44 languages for 92 countries and 1.5 million pages. I also work with fourteen Silicon Valley startups plus help many of my friends who have websites. I help them with SEO for their websites.

- Sign up for my newsletter at eepurl.com/wC-C1 or my website.
- Read more about me at andreas.com.
- Have a comment or question? Send me an email to andreas@andreas.com.

Why Did I Write This?

I teach digital marketing at INSEEC in San Francisco / Silicon Valley. Our students either want to get jobs in digital marketing or they want to build their own startups so they need to learn how to do SEO.

I'm also an advisor to Silicon Valley startups. They must show up in search engines so they need SEO.

Who Is This For?

Use this to do SEO for a small website for a startup, small business, or personal site with less than 50 pages.

Who Is This Not For?

If your website has several thousand pages or more, or your startup is late-stage, you use enterprise SEO. At that level, it's an entirely different game, just like the difference in playing a bit of soccer with your friends at your picnic and how Manchester United plays soccer around the world against professional teams. For your picnic, you only need a ball. Manchester United has teams, coaches, trainers, doctors, stadiums, jerseys, fleets of airplanes, TV studios, teams for marketing, sales, and so on. And hundreds of soccer balls. Enterprise SEO uses different strategies, tools, and methods.

Tools for SEO

You only need a few tools.

Google's SEO Tools

- There are many SEO tools on the market, both for free or paid. The best tools are Google Adwords, Google Analytics, and Google Search Console and they're free from Google.
- You must install Google Adwords, Google Analytics, and Google Search Console.
- Install these Google tools as soon as possible. Today. Right now. When you set these up, they start to collect data. You can then continue with other work and when you return, you'll have lots of keyword data.

By the way, people at Google don't have much to do, so they get bored, which means they change the names of menus and move buttons around. If I write Analytics | Acquisition | SEO | Queries and you can't find this in your Google Analytics, then you'll have to figure out how Google renamed it.

A Few Tips for Using Microsoft Excel

You'll also need a spreadsheet. I use Microsoft Excel. Most of you may already know this, but in my experience, some don't, so let's go over this.

- Spreadsheets or Worksheets?: Microsoft Word is a word processor which has Word documents. In the same way, Microsoft Excel has a spreadsheet which can have several documents, which are called worksheets. In the steps in this ebook, you'll download a bunch of spreadsheets. You create a main spreadsheet (My-Happy-SEO-Work.xlsx or whatever), create worksheets, and copy the spreadsheets into each worksheet. You'll end up with one spreadsheet with lots of worksheets.
- To create a new worksheet, click the + sign at the bottom of Excel.
- To name a worksheet, double click the worksheet's tab (Sheet1, Sheet2, etc.) and rename it.
- You can also sort the worksheets. Click, grab, and drag it to a new position.
- You can sort columns in Excel. Let say you have a worksheet with four columns and each column has a heading (such as Keyword, Searches, Bids, and CTR). Select the heading cells. In the Home tab at far right, there is AZ with a small icon of a funnel. It also has "Sort & Filter". Click the little down arrow. Select "Filter". This adds a sorting button to each column. You can click each column to sort by that column. When you want to sort by Searches, click the arrow and select "Sort by Largest to Smallest". (If you're one of my students, go to Slack and download a sample spreadsheet with all of this set up.)

Keyword Research

Find the Keywords

The first step is to find keywords that are both relevant and have lots of traffic. We will do this by using several tools and steps. At the end, we will have one spreadsheet with seven or eight worksheets. One of the worksheets will be the final collection of top keywords.

Keyword Research with Google Adwords

- Open Adwords | Tools | Keyword Planner and select "Search for New Keywords Using a Phrase, Website, or Category".
- Set the location and language. If you are interested in keywords for France, set the Targeting to France. Set Languages to French. If you're interested only in Canada, don't set the location to "All Locations". That will include data for South America, Africa, and so on, which will mess up your data.
- Set the Date Range to the last four years to get the most data.

- Google Adwords Keyword tool will show traffic volume for only 200 keywords per search, so you'll have to do this several times. Select the first 200 keywords, paste into the box "Your Product or Service", and click the blue "Get Ideas" button. Download the result. Do this again for the next 200 keywords. I suggest you do this at least five times. Each time, Google Adwords will suggest additional keywords for each group of 200 keywords so you may get 1,000 to 2,000 keywords.
- Add each of these spreadsheets as worksheets to your main spreadsheet.

Competitor Research with Google Adwords

Instead of keywords, you can insert your competitors' URL into the Adwords tool. This shows what Google thinks the website is about.

- Make a list of five similar competitors. They should be in your market and generally about the same size as your company.
- Go to Adwords | Tools | Keyword Planner.
- Instead of pasting keywords into the first box ("Search for New Keywords Using a Phrase, Website, or Category"), paste your competitor's URL in the box "Your Landing Page".
- Copy the five spreadsheets into your main spreadsheet. Copy each spreadsheet and paste it as a worksheet. Name the worksheets Competitor-1, Competitor-2, Competitor-3, and so on. Use the names of your competitors.
- If a website is new or Google's computer doesn't understand it, there may not be keywords for it or Google shows wrong keywords.

You should check your own website. If the displayed keywords are relevant, then you've done a good job. But if Google shows irrelevant keywords or very few keywords, then your site's content is unclear.

More Keyword Research with Google Adwords

Google Adwords has another tool to show keywords.

- Set the calendar to All Time.
- Select Keywords | Search Terms.
- This shows you a table of keywords that brought traffic to your site. This includes keywords in your Adwords account. It also includes keywords that are not in your Adwords account.
- Click the down arrow to download the table as a spreadsheet.
- Keep the following columns: Search Term, Added/Excluded, Campaign, Ad Group, Clicks, Impressions. You may delete the other columns.
- Sort the list by impressions.
- Copy the five spreadsheets into your main spreadsheet.

Keyword Research with Google Analytics

Still here? Okay, next tool. Let's use Google Analytics to get more keywords. This shows more keywords that people use to reach your site.

- For this to work, you must first install Google Search Console and tie it to your analytics account.
- Open Google Analytics | Acquisition | Search Console | Queries.
- Sort by clicks (click the heading "Clicks").
- You'll notice that the top keyword is "(not set)". For no real reason, Google won't show you a bunch of keywords for your site. But you get these from other tools, don't you? So what's the point for Google to not show these? Whatever.
- At the right-bottom of the screen, it shows that you are viewing the first ten rows of 2,000 rows. Set this to show as many rows as possible.
- Download the spreadsheet. Keep the columns "Search Query, Clicks, Impressions". You can delete the rest.
- Add this as a worksheet to your main spreadsheet.

Note: Look at the top 10-30 keywords. You may think your website is one thing but most visitors come to your site for an entirely different topic. You may want to expand the top pages or add additional pages based on those keywords. Write meta-tags for those pages that include the search terms that people are using.

Keyword Research with Google Search Console

Remember how I said that Google gets bored and changes the names of things? Good ol' *Google Webmaster Tools* was suddenly renamed to *Google Search Console*. However, everyone still calls it *Webmaster Tools* so Google often uses both names.

- Go to Google Search Console | Search Traffic | Search Analytics.
- Select Clicks, Impressions, CTR, and Position.
- Select Queries.
- Set the Date Range to Last 90 Days.
- The table will show you the keywords which brought traffic (measured by clicks) to your site, including your page's rank for that search term.
- At the bottom of the page, click Download to get a copy of the list. Add it to your main spreadsheet.

Again, look at the list carefully. You may notice that your audience has a different perception of your website. Look for common topics and see if you can entire add more information about that topic or create new pages. These are the topics that bring people to your site.

Note: Sort the list by Position (smallest to largest). This shows you the search terms for which your site shows up at the top of Google. Look at the search terms in positions one to perhaps 5.0. These get the most visibility. Look for keywords with high impressions and CTR. See if you can add additional pages or material for those search terms. Write meta-tags for those pages that include the search terms that people are using.

Level of Indexation

While we're in Google Search Console, let's look at the Index Status report. This tells us how many pages at our website have been indexed by Google.

- Go to Google Search Console | Google Index | Index Status.
- At the top, Total Index shows a number, such as 60. This means Google has found 60 of your pages.
- Compare that number with the number of pages at your site. If you have 70 pages, then 60 / 70 = .857 X 100 = 85.7%. This means 86% of your site has been indexed.
- I've often seen indexation levels at 15% or 20%. That's pretty bad; most of the website is unfindable. You should have 95% or greater indexation.
- To get high indexation, create an XML site map. Wait a few days and check your indexation again.

Of course, nothing with Google is this easy. Just because your webpage is in Google's database doesn't mean your page will be found. You have to be in the database and you need to have traffic to the page. If the page doesn't have traffic, Google won't show it.

Final Step: Combine the Worksheets

- By now, you have ten or fifteen worksheets in your spreadsheet.
- Create a new worksheet and name it "Top-Keywords".
- Copy all of the worksheets into the Top-Keywords worksheet. You may end up with several thousand keywords.
- You now have a list of all of the keywords for your industry/market.
- You only need the columns Keyword and Average Monthly Searches.
- If there are keywords without data for Average Monthly Searches, make a copy of those and use Google Adwords | Tools | Keyword Planner to get search volume data.

- Sort the list by "Avg. Monthly Searches".
- You only need to look at the keywords with lots of monthly searches.
- Go through the list and pick out the keywords that are relevant to your project.

Combine Keywords in Phrases

Look for keywords that can be combined into a phrase. For example, you have keywords such as "best charity" and "donate money". You can combine these into one phrase ("donate money to the best charity) which covers both keywords. Combine as many keywords as you can.

Use the Keywords in Meta-Tags

Before we take the next step of reviewing competitors' meta-tags, we have to make a new worksheet.

- Make a worksheet for your meta-tags and name it "Meta-tags".
- Create the following columns: URL, Name, Keyword, TITLE, Chars, DESCRIPTION, Chars, and Heading. The column "Name" is for the name of the page. The column "Keyword" is for the top keyword for the page.
- The Chars columns are special columns: they tell you how many characters you have the TITLE and DESCRIPTION tags. You can only have 68 characters (including spaces) in the TITLE tag, so it's useful to know the number.
- To use this, click in the cell and enter the formula "**=SUM((LEN(D2)))**" (without citation marks). Where it has D2, enter the TITLE cell's information (column and row).
- For example, D2 is column d, row 2. Type a few words into the cell for TITLE (where it says "Official Site" below).
- If you did this right, the Char cell will show the number of characters (13) in the TITLE cell.
- Here's an example of the meta-tags worksheet:

- At the top center of the screen shot, you can see the formula for cell E2. It shows the number of characters in the cell D2. Cell G2 uses the same formula to count the characters in cell F2.
- (If you're one of my students, go to Slack and download a spreadsheet with this set up.)

Research Your Competitors' Meta-Tags

- Open the worksheet named "Meta-tags".
- Open your competitor's website in a browser.
- Right-click and select View Source to see the HTML code.
- Use Ctrl-F (find), search for TITLE, and copy the title tag.
- Use Ctrl-F (find), search for DESC, and copy the description tag.
- Do this for five to ten of your competitors.
- You can how your competitors are doing SEO. If the DESCRIPTION tag is blank or the TITLE tag and DESCRIPTION tag are poorly written, then they're not trying. Very likely, they have low traffic. That's good news for you.

Write the TITLE Tag

- Write a TITLE tag that encourages visitors to come to your webpage. The TITLE tag states the benefits to your visitors. Use the keyword first and then the name of the webpage.
- Google allows around 68 characters (including spaces) in the TITLE tag. Sometimes, it's more and sometimes, it's less.
- The TITLE tag should open with the top keyword, state the URL, and add a city or telephone if relevant.
- Use the pattern <TITLE>Keyword | URL | City | Telephone </TITLE>
- For example, <TITLE>San Francisco Crab Dinner | Franciscan.com | Pier 43 | 415.362.7733</TITLE>

Write the DESCRIPTION Tag

- Use your top two or three keywords to write several phrases.
- Use up to 167 characters (including spaces) in the DESCRIPTION tag.
- Use the pattern <META name="description" content="Keyword | Benefit | URL | Telephone | CTA">
- For example, <META name="description" content="San Francisco seafood at its best. Romantic dinners w/ views of Bay, Golden Gate, and sunset. Pier 43, Fisherman's Wharf. Reservations 415.362.7733. Call Now!">
- Open with the top keywords, describe the benefit for the visitor, and close with CTA (call to action), such as "Call Now, Visit Us, Buy Now".

Write the KEYWORD Tag

Google, Bing, and Yandex ignore the meta-KEYWORD tag. You don't need to use this.

Here's an example: <meta name="KEYWORD" content="goldfish, backyard pond, frog pond">

You can either put a few keywords there to fill the space or just not use it. It doesn't matter.

Write ALT Tags in the Images

The image link has an ALT tag that holds text about the image. You can use this to add a sentence of descriptive text.

- Here's an example: <img src="images/goldfish.gif" ALT="Get goldfish for your pond at Goldfish.com. Los Angeles. Tel. 555.123.4567">
- The amount of text should be proportionate to the size of the image. If the image is a small button, don't add a long paragraph of text.

The Page Heading

Search engines pay attention to a page heading because it has information about the page.

- The heading should use the H1 tag (H1 = heading).
- Use your top keywords as the first two or three words in the heading.
- Here's an example of an H1 tag: <H1>How to Pick Goldfish for Your Pond</H1>

The most common problem with headings is use of the wrong tag. Many web designers don't like the H1 heading because it uses a big font. They choose instead images, SPAN tags, or DIV tags. That looks nice, but search engines can't tell if those images are headings. Body text that uses SPAN will be treated as body text, not as header text. You must use H1 formatting. You can still have your design. Use CSS to modify the look of the H1 tag so it renders the way you want it.

The Text on the Page

The text on the page should be descriptive, informational, and include the main keywords.

- Use your keywords in the first two to three words of the body text.
- Use the <P> tag to mark body text.
- Write naturally. Don't stuff keywords into a page. Don't use keyword-density tools. Search engines have tools to detect machine-generated text.

Tip: Don't open the first paragraph with a sentence that starts with a clause, such as "If you are looking for something nice to put in your pond…." People scan the first few words of the first paragraph. If it's not relevant, they go back to the search engine. Open the first sentence with your keywords. For example, "Goldfish are the ideal fish for your backyard pond."

A Few More Tips

Make an XML Sitemap

An XML sitemap is a list of all pages at your website. Submit it to Google and it'll index your entire site.

- Make an XML sitemap at XML-Sitemaps.com
- Download it to your computer, upload to your server, and submit to Google Search Console.

Post Your URL to Twitter

To quickly get in Google, tweet your URL in Twitter. Write a short description of the page and add the URL.

Test Your TITLE and DESCRIPTION Tags

You can use Google Adwords to test TITLE tags. Create ads with different TITLE tags, show them until you have more than 1,000 impressions for each one, and select the one with the highest click-through rate (CTR).

You can also test TITLE tags in Google Analytics. In Google Analytics, go to Content | Content by Title. The report shows the page's traffic. Use keywords to write different TITLE tags and see if the traffic improves.

More about SEO

- Good news: Basic SEO gets you into Google and people may be able to find your site.
- Bad news: Google is much more complicated than this.
- Better news: Most of your competitors are really bad at SEO. So if you do just an okay job, you'll be ahead of them. If you learn more SEO and do a great job, you'll be at the top of the search results.
- There is also SEO for YouTube, apps, social media, mobile, and voice search.
- And what about SEO on voice searches?

To learn more, read my SEO-eBook at **andreas.com/books-by-andreas/#ebooks**

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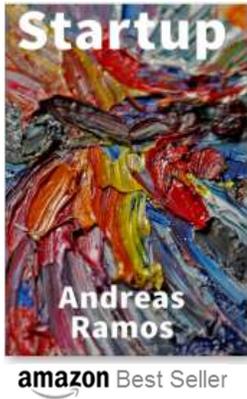
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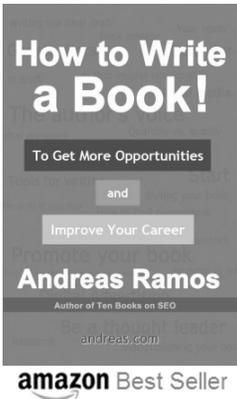
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