

SEO Checklist Guide



Introduction

Search Engine Optimization (SEO) is the process of making changes in different areas of your website in order for the search engines to find and deliver targeted visitors to your website. A positive search engine presence (or lack thereof) can make or break the success of a business website and this SEO checklist guide provides valuable information to improve SEO efforts.

SEO is unlike any form of marketing. While some may consider SEO to be purely technical, reserved for web designers and other tech folk, in truth SEO is really only 20% technical website factors. The rest is all marketing. Those with strong marketing and writing backgrounds tend to understand SEO and how to successfully use it to their advantage better than others.

However, SEO shouldn't be compared to traditional marketing methods. It is a different animal with its own strategies, set of rules and dominating players. The number one thing to take away from this guide – SEO is an ongoing process. It's the longest of long term and builds upon itself over time. True SEO is never done.

This SEO checklist guide is meant to serve as a frame for those just getting their feet wet in the SEO pool. It will cover everything from pre-SEO tips, on-site optimization, the measurability of SEO and more. While not an exhaustive guide, the goal of this guide it is to provide DIY website owners and marketing professionals with the information they need to begin their own SEO journey with a little more confidence.

As someone who has worked in this industry for over 13 years, I've seen trends and tactics come and go, watched some websites flounder while others thrived and witnessed SEO grow into an invaluable marketing tool. This guide is my attempt to arm website owners, business owners and marketing professionals everywhere with knowledge and understanding so they can help their website succeed.

Good luck and Thanks for Reading!



Nick Stamoulis
President & Founder

Brick Marketing

Main - 781-999-1222

nick@brickmarketing.com

<http://www.brickmarketing.com/>

Phase 1 Step 1: Pre SEO Tips

Before website owners can even begin to think about SEO, there are a few things they need to figure out. This section deals with all the pre SEO activities that form the foundation of any solid [SEO strategy](#).

The first thing site owners have to ask themselves: **“Do I want sales or leads?”**

- What is our conversion metric?
 - Conversion = action taken by the visitor
- How do we convert on our site?
 - If we want people to pick up the phone, is our office ready to handle the calls?
 - Are we trying to get a visitor to purchase our product directly from the site?

The goal of the website has to be clearly defined and obvious on every page.

Check out these images from the [Brick Marketing](#) website:



One of the site's goals is to get visitors to fill out a proposal form. The form box is featured on the left hand side on every page, while bright yellow call-to-action buttons are scattered throughout to remind the visitor of the site's intent. **Repeating call-to-actions is key!** Don't let the visitor forget about what you want them to do.

Next, website owners need to **determine “Who is my audience?”**

Chances are you already have this information somewhere, stashed away in a business plan or previous marketing plan. You need to take into consideration demographic, psychographic and geographic factors.

One of the most important things to think about is your target audience's online behavior. Baby boomers react to and handle the Internet in a very different manner from Millennials. What works for

one target market might not work for another. Is your website designed with your audience's needs and expectations in mind? *How your target audience lives their online life will directly affect how you try to reach them.* Take the time to understand your audience and their off- and online behaviors before trying to execute a [search engine optimization campaign](#) for your website.

Pre SEO tip number three: website owners have to be realistic when it comes to **determining the competition.**

Sure, the target audience might be the same, but that doesn't mean they are a direct competitor to your site. For instance, let's say you run a small e-commerce site for your local clothing boutique. You could say the Gap is one of your competitors, since they also sell clothing. But you have to *consider business factors when deciding who your true competition is.* Your local boutique will never be able to compete against the Gap in terms of sheer man power, marketing budget, brand recognition and online presence. And that's ok! Don't try to beat the Gap. Focus on beating the other boutique across town. They are competing in the same geographic region for the same foot traffic you are. That is your competition!

In order to beat your competition, it helps to know what they are doing. Luckily for website and small business owners, there are a bevy of great tools (and free!) to help you do just that. The following sites can provide you with the raw data, but you need a human eye to digest and process the information so it can be useful. *Note: These are the tools Brick Marketing actually uses; this is not a paid endorsement.*



[WebsiteGrader.com](#) is powered by Hubspot.com and gives you an overview of your site. It's great for measuring the inbound marketing effectiveness of a site.

[Compete.com](#) provides you with intelligent data about your competitors' sites: check out what keywords they are ranking for, their various traffic sources, even their ad spending.

[Alexa.com](#) can give you a good estimate of how much traffic a site is getting.

Phase 1 Step 2: Site Structure

If you're in the process of redoing your site and considering launching an [SEO campaign](#) at the same time, you can effectively kill two birds with one stone. **Site structure and navigation** actually play important roles when it comes to SEO.

You want to *make it easy for someone to do business with you*. Your site structure should lead visitors down a predetermined path of conversion. A website's goals should be well reflected in the site design and structure. If your goal is to sell a product, make it evident from the home page.

While your homepage is often considered the most important page of your website, it's important to *establish each page as its own point of entry*. That is crucial for long term success of your site. If you do a good job with your SEO, visitors should enter your site through those pages, since that is where they found the answer to their search query. That's why you need to have a call-to-action on every page. If a visitor is confused, they won't buy.

SEO: What is it? Where is it?

What is SEO? SEO stands for **Search Engine Optimization**, and (in a nutshell) is the process of making changes in different areas of your website in order for the search engines to find and deliver targeted visitors to your website.

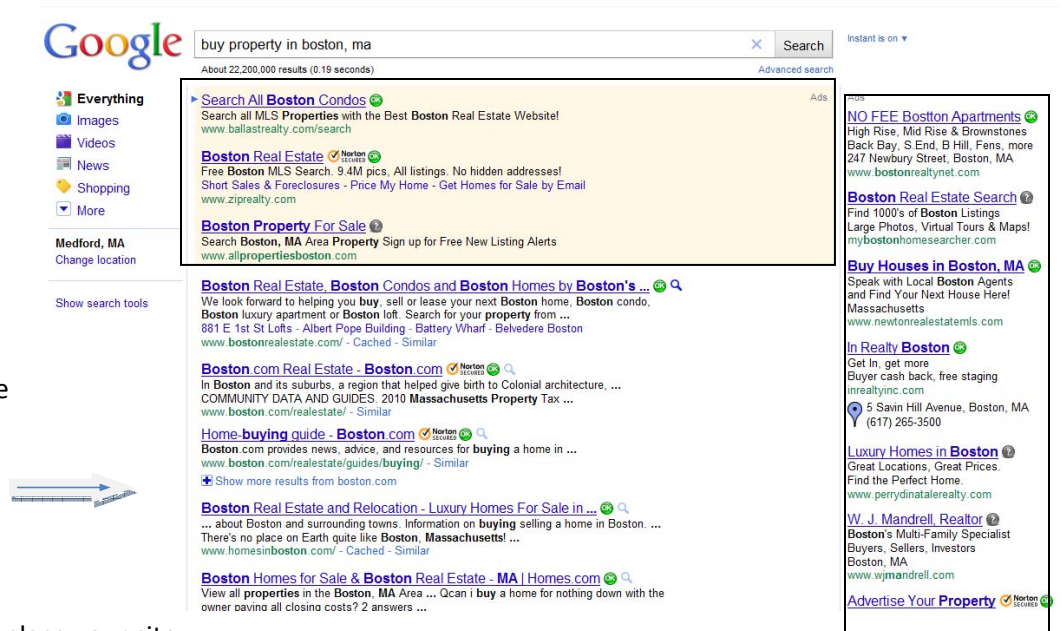
Search engines (the big three are Google, Yahoo! and Bing) rank individual pages of websites, not the website as a whole. Every page on your site has the chance to take a place in the search engine results page (SERP).

[Search engines want a good user-experience.](#) The better the search results, the more users choose that search engine over another. If you do a good job with your SEO, you clean up their search results! Sites that play by the webmaster guidelines of the search engines (white hat SEO) usually rank higher than those that try to game the system (black hat SEO).

So where is SEO? Check out this image below:

The two areas within the boxes are known as **paid search**. These positions are bought using PPC advertising.

This area here is where SEO makes the difference. Known as **organic or natural search**, 80% of clicks come from here. This is where SEO works to place your site.



Phase 1 Step 3: The Importance of Content

In the world of SEO, [content](#) is king. It is the most important factor of a website's long term SEO success.

Search engines use search spiders to crawl your website, looking for content that matches a user's search. These spiders can't see impressive designs or graphics; they only see your website in words and text. That's why many SEO professionals are against building a site entirely in Flash. To a search spider, it's a blank page, even if it does look very impressive to a visitor.

But even though search engines use content to crawl your site, **content should always be written for the user!** Content is what is going to convince a visitor to choose your website out of the results and it is what is going to encourage them to act.

When writing content, be mindful of the following things:

- Watch out for spelling errors and grammar mistakes
- Do not embed content in images (especially your company logo. This should always be readable text)
- Write for humans!
 - If you sell CAT supplies, don't make every other word CAT. Seeing CAT followed by CAT followed by CAT gets really annoying, even for CAT owners. CAT.

If you are thinking about outsourcing anything to a 3rd party, let it be your content. It is too important to be sub-par. Not every website owner is also a fantastic writer, so go out and bring a fantastic writer aboard!

Phase 1 Step 4: Keyword Research

[Keyword research](#) is a critical component of any SEO campaign. Keyword research is going to determine who can see your website, search engines and users alike. Your audience is going to be using specific keywords to conduct searches. **Missing out on important keywords means missing out on potential customers.** Keyword research is going to make or break your SEO campaign.

Keyword Competition

The broader a keyword is (shoes, cat, software, etc) the more competition there is for it. If you are just entering the SEO game, don't hope to gain the top spots for one of these broader keywords. There are plenty of companies who have been at it a lot longer than you and they don't intend on letting go of their rank.

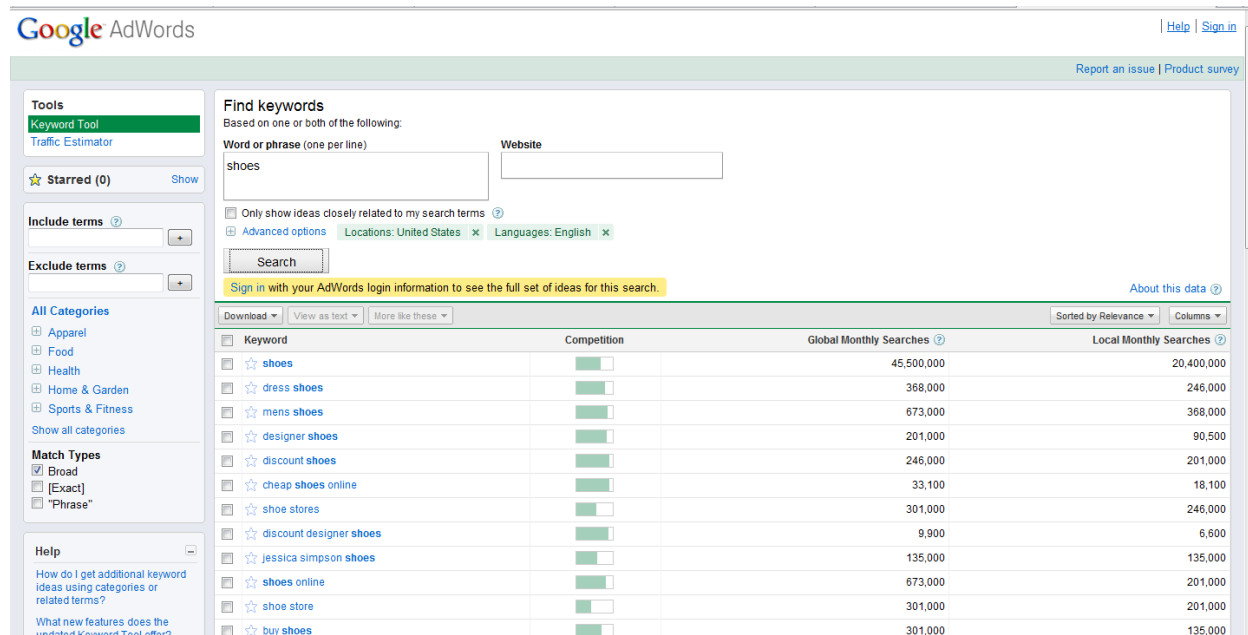
Long-tail keywords (aka niche keywords) are more targeted and usually more of a phrase than a single word. "Purchase women's red shoes" for example, versus just "shoes." While there is less competition for long-tail keywords, there are also fewer searches being conducted. However, searchers who use long-tail keywords are usually a more targeted audience for your site.

The goal of keyword research is to find the mid range keywords, where there isn't too much competition but still a healthy search volume. A site should have a good mix of broad, mid range and long-tail keywords to make sure they are ideally optimized for any user's search.

The easiest way to conduct keyword research is to use the free [Google Keyword Research Tool](#). It will help you come up with variations of your targeted keywords.

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The screenshot shows the Google AdWords Keyword Tool interface. On the left, there's a sidebar with 'Tools' (Keyword Tool, Traffic Estimator), 'Starred (0)', 'Include terms', 'Exclude terms', 'All Categories' (Apparel, Food, Health, Home & Garden, Sports & Fitness), 'Match Types' (Broad, [Exact], 'Phrase'), and 'Help'. The main area is titled 'Find keywords' and shows a search for 'shoes' with a 'Website' field. Below the search bar, there's a table of keyword suggestions with columns for 'Keyword', 'Competition', 'Global Monthly Searches', and 'Local Monthly Searches'. The table lists various shoe-related keywords and their search volumes.

Keyword	Competition	Global Monthly Searches	Local Monthly Searches
shoes	High	45,500,000	20,400,000
dress shoes	Medium	368,000	246,000
mens shoes	Medium	673,000	368,000
designer shoes	Medium	201,000	90,500
discount shoes	Medium	246,000	201,000
cheap shoes online	Low	33,100	18,100
shoe stores	Medium	301,000	246,000
discount designer shoes	Low	9,900	6,600
Jessica simpson shoes	Low	135,000	135,000
shoes online	Medium	673,000	201,000
shoe store	Medium	301,000	201,000
buy shoes	Medium	301,000	135,000

If you are trying to come up with keywords that are specific to your area, “Boston shoe stores,” for instance, conduct the research for “shoe stores” and incorporate “Boston” into the keywords you select. For example, a locally targeted keyword list for Boston shoe stores would look something like:

- Boston shoe store
- Shoe store Boston
- Boston, MA shoe store
- Shoe store, Boston, MA
- Boston, Mass shoe store
- Shoe store, Boston Mass
- Discount shoe store, Boston
- Boston, discount shoe store

And so forth...

Custom SEO Consulting Services

You Are Here: Home > Consulting Services > SEO Consulting

Brick Marketing offers businesses, entrepreneurs and companies of all types and skill levels highly personalized SEO consulting services. Our custom SEO consulting services are provided by Brick Marketing President and Founder and SEO consultant, Nick Stamoulis. With many years of search engine optimization (SEO) experience, Nick Stamoulis will spend time with you to craft the best approach and strategy to achieve your SEO objectives and online business goals of any size.

SEO Consulting Services FOR:

- Marketing Departments of all sizes that need direction.
- Businesses of ALL sizes, including start ups that need feedback.
- In House employees that need direction.
- Webmasters that need a detailed SEO consultation performed on their website.
- Other SEO and SEM Professionals that need an outside perspective.
- Website Designers and Developers that need client SEO help.
- Anyone looking for offsite SEO recommendations (link building) or link audit!

Customized SEO Consulting Services Overview:

- Get SEO consulting help for a few hours to lead your search efforts.
- Receive a custom SEO audit developed for your website or custom hourly SEO consulting.
- You name it! The point of providing a customized SEO consulting service is to help your company and search engine optimization efforts exactly how and when you need it.

SEO Consulting Sign Up Process:

- **STEP 1** - Process your hourly SEO consulting payment by credit card through Paypal

You want to **target several variations of the same phrase** because each user searches a little differently. This includes the order of words as well as plurals (store/stores). NEVER INCLUDE MISSPELLINGS, even if people are searching for them. A good rule of thumb is to target **2-5 unique keywords** for each page of your website. Pick and choose your keywords carefully; some are much more competitive than others.

Here is the critical part: the **keywords have to be directly relevant to the content on that page**. This can be the hardest thing to do well.

Let's take a look at the [SEO consulting services](#) page of the Brick Marketing site:

The keywords for this page are “seo consulting”, “seo consulting services”, “custom seo consulting” and “seo consultation.”

Notice that this entire page only talks about SEO consulting? Brick Marketing also offers [Internet marketing consulting services](#), but that is a separate page of content. While we are going after keywords related to Internet marketing consulting, this isn't the page to do it.

Keyword research isn't about what your site does; it's about what that individual page does.

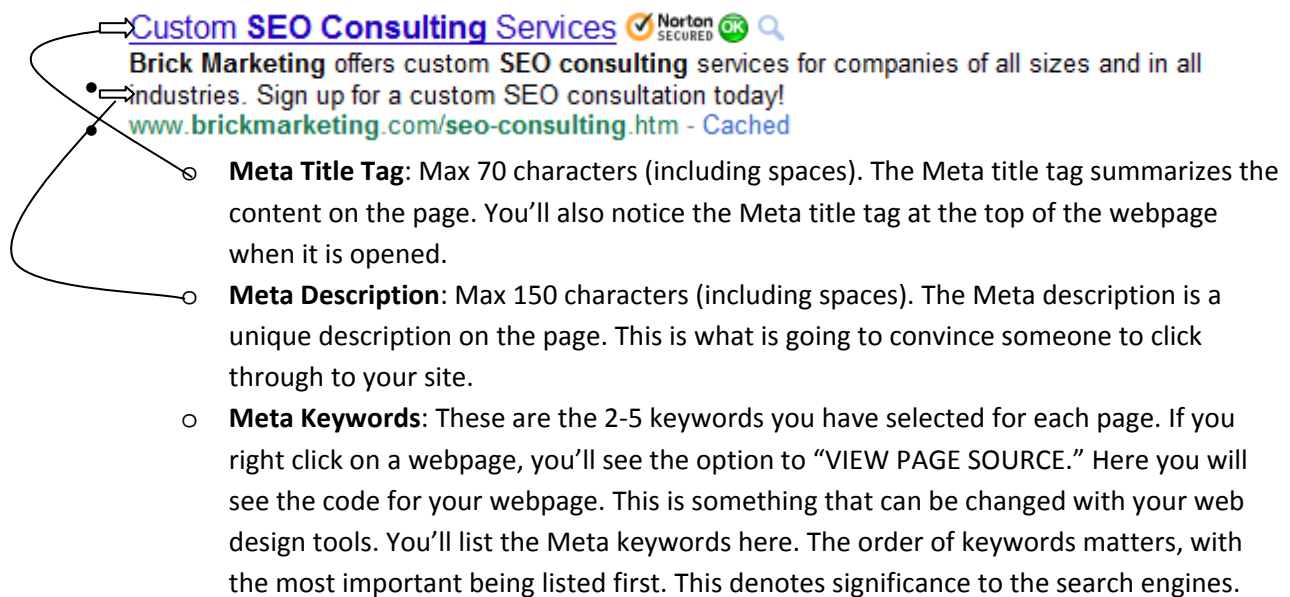
Remember, search engines rank individual pages, not entire sites. Your page has to match the user's search to get pulled.

Phase 1 Step 5: On-Site Optimization

On-site optimization can be looked at as phase one of a two part process. Phase two is Link Building, and we will discuss what that entails at greater length later in the guide.

On-site optimization is all about going through each page of your website and incorporating your newly selected keywords. The following is a list of website components that need to be optimized for SEO:

- **Content**
- **Meta Title Tag, Description, Keywords**

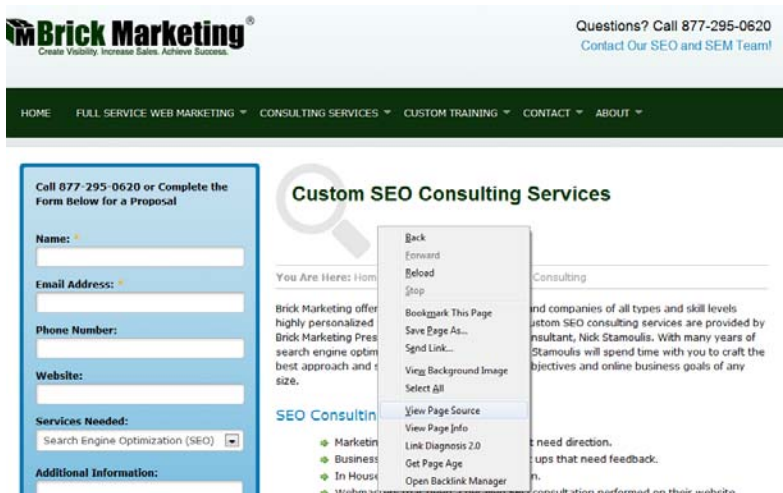


The screenshot shows a web page for 'Custom SEO Consulting Services'. The meta title is 'Custom SEO Consulting Services' and the meta description is 'Brick Marketing offers custom SEO consulting services for companies of all sizes and in all industries. Sign up for a custom SEO consultation today!'. The URL is 'www.brickmarketing.com/seo-consulting.htm - Cached'. Annotations with arrows point from the text 'Meta Title Tag' and 'Meta Description' to the corresponding elements on the page.

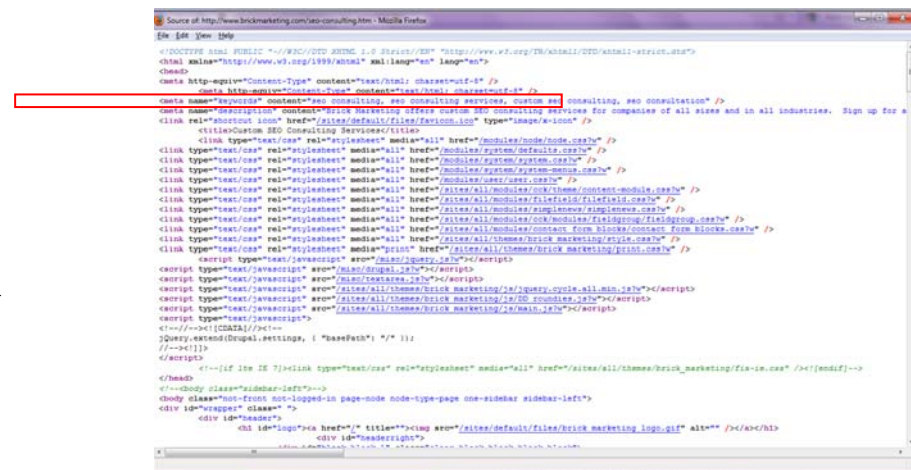
Meta Title Tag: Max 70 characters (including spaces). The Meta title tag summarizes the content on the page. You'll also notice the Meta title tag at the top of the webpage when it is opened.

Meta Description: Max 150 characters (including spaces). The Meta description is a unique description on the page. This is what is going to convince someone to click through to your site.

Meta Keywords: These are the 2-5 keywords you have selected for each page. If you right click on a webpage, you'll see the option to "VIEW PAGE SOURCE." Here you will see the code for your webpage. This is something that can be changed with your web design tools. You'll list the Meta keywords here. The order of keywords matters, with the most important being listed first. This denotes significance to the search engines.



The screenshot shows the Brick Marketing website. On the left is a contact form with fields for Name, Email Address, Phone Number, Website, and Services Needed (with a dropdown menu). On the right is a page titled 'Custom SEO Consulting Services'. A context menu is open over the page, showing options like Back, Forward, Reload, Stop, Bookmark This Page, Save Page As..., Send Link..., View Background Image, Select All, View Page Source, View Page Info, Link Diagnosis 2.0, Get Page Age, and Open Backlink Manager.



• H1 Tag

- The headline of your page. It should incorporate the most important keyword. H2/H3/H4 tags and so on refer to the subheadings of your page.

• URL Structure

- The URL structure should be used to describe the page. Avoid using lengthy URLs or choosing generic names like “page1.html.” Don’t stuff your URLs with excessive keywords (ex: search-engine-optimization-SEO-searchengineoptimization) as this looks spammy.



• Image Tags

- Also known as **alt text**, this is what you see when your cursor comes to rest on an image. Since the search spiders can’t see images, just text, incorporating an image tag allows that image to show up in the search results. This is especially useful for e-commerce sites. It is also good in case the visitor’s browser is having a hard time loading the image. They still know what was supposed to be there.

Users Can Block Your Domain in Google Search Results

Writing by Brick Marketing in Search Engines



A few weeks ago, Google rolled out an **update for their Chrome Extension**, where users could opt to block certain websites from the search results pages. The update was designed to have user feedback help Google eliminate content farms from their search results. Now Google has taken this feature and incorporated it into their search results. Once a user has blocked a domain they won't see it in their search results. So what does this mean for you and your website? Number one- you better make certain you are producing great content on a regular basis. Users can now choose whether or not they want your website to be a source of information. If you don't meet their standards, you'll never get a second chance to prove yourself; you'll simply vanish from that user's online life. It also means that users are getting to personalize their search experience. So this **CLICK HERE TO READ MORE...**

• XML Sitemap

- **This is the last thing you should do to complete on-site optimization.** XML sitemaps allow search spiders to crawl and index every page on your site. Once you have installed a root directory, check out <http://www.xml-sitemaps.com/> (one that Brick Marketing uses for our clients) to get a sitemap designed for your newly optimized site.

Check out the [Google Webmaster Guidelines](#) for further instructions on submitting your sitemap.

- **Internal Linking Structure**

- Including footers is a good way to incorporate direct links throughout the site. You never want a visitor to be more than 3 clicks away from their desired information. Make it easy for them to navigate your site! Why should they have to scroll back up to go to a new page? Include relevant links within the content of one page to pull them through to a new page.



- **Page Load Time**

- This is all about creating a good user-experience. **SEO best practice tip: keep page load time under 5 seconds.** Google has admitted to taking page load time into account when ranking sites. Tools.pingdom.com provides free page load time analysis.

- **Code Analysis**

- Make sure all of your code is correct so the website looks the way you intend it to!

Each page should be treated as a possible entryway to your website. Most website owners spend a lot of time on their homepage to the neglect of internal pages. If you do your SEO right, each page should be able to deliver traffic to your site. Remember, search engines look at individual pages, not websites as a whole!

Once you have done all of these things, **sign up for Google Webmaster Tools and Google Analytics** and submit your site! These free tools will provide you with priceless data about your site (number of visitors, bounce rate, conversion rate, keyword ranking, etc) to help you fine tune your SEO in the future.

It should also be noted that **the older a website is, the more trust it has with the search engines.** Good SEO relies on that age trust factor. A site that has been around for 5+ years has the trust of the search engines, so on-site optimization is going to make a more noticeable difference faster. A brand new site, no matter how well optimized, isn't going to have that trust. If you've recently launched your site, use the first year to really fine-tune your on-site optimization.

Some SEO professionals may disagree, but Brick Marketing operates under the premise that a site should be well optimized before beginning Phase 2: Link Building.

Phase 2 Step 1: Link Building

[Link building](#) is the practice and ongoing campaign to increase your website and company's brand and visibility in the search engines, as well as online in general. Link building should NOT just be about getting [one-way links](#) (aka inbound links) to point to your website. Although search engines do look at the number and quality of your one-way links when determining your site's rank, link building is not just for SEO.

The goal of link building is [to grow links from many different \(yet relevant!\) sites](#) over a period of time. Doing too much or too little link building will actually hurt your website and SEO efforts. [Too much link building looks suspicious](#) to the search engines. How did one site get 10,000 links in a month without employing some black hat SEO tricks to make it happen? Too little link building means it is not bringing any value to your site.

The [first step in link building is to conduct a link audit](#). You want to run a link audit on your site, as well as your top three competitors. This will give you a good baseline to work from. You'll see how much (if any) link building your competitors have done, and you'll be able to make sure there aren't any "bad sites" (porn, gambling, alcohol, etc) pointing towards you. Search engines look at where your one-way links are coming from and these "bad sites" can negatively impact your ranking.



You can use Google Webmaster Tools to analyze your own site if you have signed up for the free tool (which every website owner should). To run a link audit on your competitors, LinkDiagnosis does a good job of finding and cataloging their one-way links.

Link building is all about placing your website into areas online that provide good, quality links AND can help generate visitors to your site. Seek to build your website as an "authority" in your industry! Link building should just fall in line with the rest of your online marketing activities.

Here are the numerous different link building activities available to website owners:

- [Article Marketing/Document Sharing](#)
- [Social Networking](#)
- [Directory Submission](#)
- [Blogging](#)
- [Natural Links](#)
- [Video Marketing](#)
- [Blog Comments](#)
- [Local Profiles](#)
- [Industry Associations](#)
- [Online Publicity](#)

Link building efforts should be SCHEDULED with up to 10-20 different tasks each month for 12 months! Link building is an ongoing process and creating a link building schedule will help you keep track of what

you've done and where you are lacking. You want to **take a diversified approach to your link building**. That means you don't do all your directory submissions one month, video marketing the next and so on. Search engines like to see a broad sweep of activities. It feeds into the trust factor- you are taking your time with your link building, aren't focusing on one thing and are employing **white hat SEO** techniques to get the job done.

Online Publicity

Write newsworthy press releases and distribute them online using services* such as:

- PRWeb
- PRLeap
- BusinessWire
- 24-7 Press Release

**Brick Marketing tends to keep away from free PR services, as they usually don't have the reach and credibility of the paid services.*

Press releases should be at least 350-400 words. You can include anchor text and full links (at least one <http://www.mycompanywebsite.com>) in the body of the press release. **SEO Best Practice Tip: 1 link per 100 words**. This keeps the press release from being considered spam. Some of the distribution sites won't allow you to publish your press release if there are too many links in it.

It has to be said that online PR is no substitute for offline PR. **Internet marketing needs to work hand-in-hand with offline marketing** efforts to get the best promotion for the brand.

Directory Submission

Submit your website to quality online directories like Yahoo! Directory, dmoz and Business.com. There are hundreds of general directory sites that you can submit your website to. Most allow for a short bio as well as the link, so it's one more place to put a company phone number and go after targeted keywords. Also investigate industry specific online directories!

SEO Best Practice Tip: Submit to directories that are US based and receive a good amount of traffic.

Whols.net will tell you where the site is listed and Compete.com can give you an idea of how much traffic the directory gets. If you see that the directory is listed overseas or has unusual spikes of traffic, steer clear. If you are going to be paying for a directory listing (one-time or annually), you want to make sure it is worth the investment and will actually help drive traffic to your site.

Social Networking

Create profiles for your business on some of the top social networking sites like Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, Google Plus, etc. There are dozens, if not hundreds of social networking sites available. It will take time to figure out which profiles are useful for your business. What has proven to be a successful **social**

Connect with Nick Stamoulis and Brick Marketing!



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[media marketing](#) strategy for one company might not make sense for another.

For instance, Foursquare makes a lot of sense for a brick and mortar business (restaurant, clothing boutique, salons, etc) because they have a physical location that a customer can “check-in” at. Online retailers might not have as much use for the location-based social networking community.

Consumers have come to expect businesses to have some sort of presence in the online social networking world. Being active in these communities builds your brand recognition and reputation, and allows you to connect with your consumers in a two-way conversation, as opposed to the one sided approach of a website.

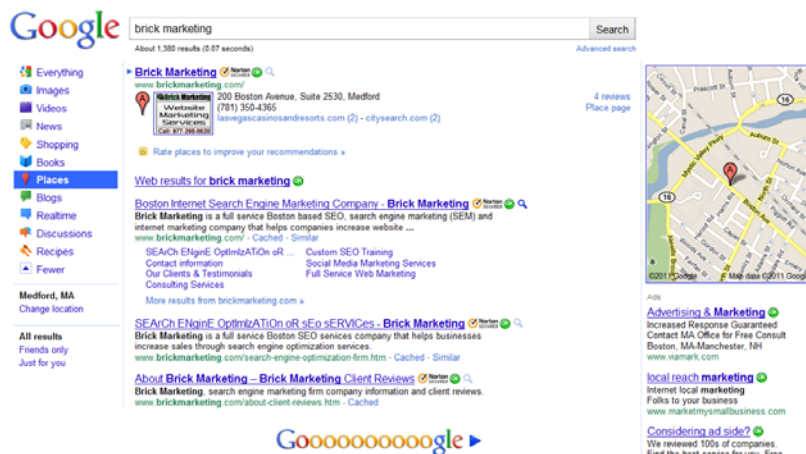
With social search gaining importance in the search engine ranking system, it’s not enough to just have social networking profiles. You have to actually use them! The more active you are the better.

SEO Best Practice Tip: You want your messaging to be similar, but not exactly the same. Each social networking community has a slightly different audience. You need to tailor your messaging to meet the expectations of each particular audience.

Local Search Engine Profiles

More and more users are looking at local search profiles when conducting a search, especially if they are searching from a mobile device. These individual profiles can individually rank, increasing your presence in the SERP (search engine results page). You should create local search profiles for your business at the following places and more

- Google Places
- Yahoo! Local
- Bing
- Superpages.com
- Yelp
- Local.com
- Merchantcircle.com
- CitySearch
- Yp.com



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SEO Best Practice Tip: Fill out these local search profiles as completely as possible. If you're allowed to upload video or photos, do it. Give your complete address and phone number every chance possible! The more information you include the more weight that profile has with the search engines.

Local search profiles also provide a place for customers to review your business. Keep an eye on these as a few bad reviews can do severe damage to your foot traffic! **Don't create fake profiles and review your own business.** People realize when a company has done this and it devalues your brand.

Blog Commenting

Research highly relevant blogs that relate to your industry, customers and business and leave appropriate comments. This doesn't mean you find a blog and drop one of those "OMG! This is exactly the info I needed, thnx!" comments you see clogging the blogosphere. **SEO Best Practice Tip: actually contribute to the conversation.**

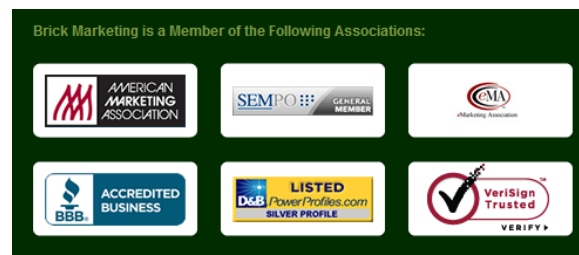
Take the time and actually read the [blog](#)! Focus your comment on one of the main points raised by the author. It's very obvious when someone didn't actually read the post and their comment is way off base. It doesn't do anything to help build your reputation. In every possible case, actually use a human name to leave the comment. This is a good faith measure with the blog writer, as people don't intentionally spam blogs like an automated computer program does.

Aim for a **minimum of three sentences**, as it shows that you put some thought into it. If you get flagged as a spammer, you lose the opportunity to ever comment on that blog again, no matter how much effort you put into leaving comments the second time around.

Industry Association Memberships

While this can be expensive, joining industry associations has its own benefits. Becoming a member of your local Chamber of Commerce or other industry associations adds credibility to your website and legitimizes your business. Most industry sites link back to their members, so it might help drive some traffic as well.

E-commerce sites would be wise to display their BBB membership and VeriSign badges, as this encourages trust with consumers who are about to enter their financial information into a third party payment site.



Article Marketing

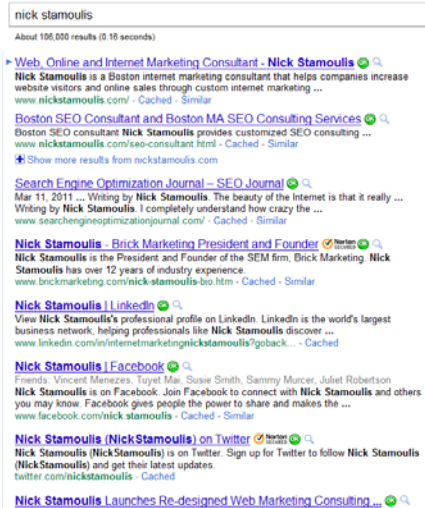
Article marketing (aka [content marketing](#)) includes writing for other sites as well as publishing a company blog and newsletter.

A company blog helps you engage your audience. Putting out new content (you should aim for at least one new post a week) keeps the blog fresh and relevant, and keeps readers coming back for new

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information. Blogs also give search engines more reason to find you. Each blog post can be optimized to rank on its own and help drive traffic to the blog and your site.

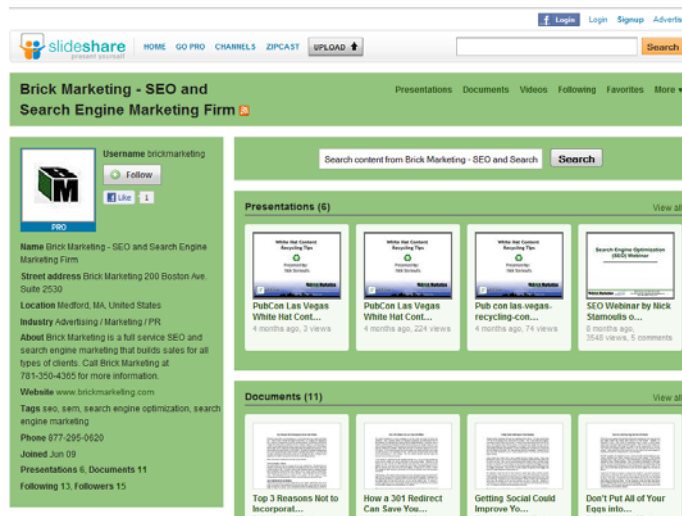


In this Google search for [Nick Stamoulis](#), President and Founder of Brick Marketing, you'll notice that his blog, the Search Engine Optimization Journal ranks third. Also notice that his social networking profiles are also ranking on the first page of results! The very last listing is actually a Brick Marketing press release.

Write helpful articles and submit them to online article directories, or guest write for other industry websites and blogs. This can help get your company name in more places, as well as establish you as an expert in your field. **SEO Best Practice Tip: make it good.** The Google Panda update declared war on content farms (sites that churn out spammy, low quality articles purely written for links) and a lot of article directory sites took a hit. You have to be writing quality content that actually interests your audience. Articles should always

be informative and not used as a way to sell your product/services. Feel free to include an author's bio with a few links and anchor text pointing back at your main site.

If you have a few old whitepapers, PowerPoint presentations or transcribed speeches, these make great content to share on [document sharing sites](#) like Scribd, DocShare, .doctoc and SlideShare. Check out the Brick Marketing SlideShare account below:



Online Video Marketing

Video marketing is inexpensive and easy. Your online video doesn't have to be a viral smash to be useful. Take a tour of your company's office, interview various staff members, provide product demonstrations, etc. Videos only need to be 30 seconds to a few minutes to serve their purpose. Any videos that are much longer than that risk losing viewers' attention.

SEO Best Practice Tip: optimize each video's description to help it rank in the search engines, as well as be found by viewers on sites like YouTube, MetaCafe, Vimeo and DailyMotion.

Natural Links

As you promote your website and build your authority as a leader in your industry through quality content, you will see one-way links develop naturally over time. They will come from your articles being used as sources, when your posts on Facebook are shared by Fans, as press releases are picked up by media sources and so on. Consider these natural links the bonus for all your link building efforts.

It is crucial that search engines see a diverse approach to [link building](#) and that it happen over time! A **blended approach shows commitment to branding** your site and search engines will see your actions as legitimate. Black hat SEO link building tactics tend to produce quick, but short lived results. You may see a huge spike in traffic one month, but then watch your site get pushed to the depths of the SERP as punishment when the search engines catch on. Some sites even get removed completely!

Some SEO professionals wouldn't classify it as such, but Brick Marketing considers **link exchanges** to be a black hat tactic. A link exchange is when one site offers to link to another in exchange for a link back. Many low-quality directory submission sites ask for a link exchange to get listed on their site. Sites that have no business linking to each other often find themselves on the wrong end of the Google Webmaster Guidelines. The few exceptions would be link exchanges between businesses that have a relationship, like an industry association and its members.

Phase 2 Step 2: Measurability

How do you measure the success of your SEO efforts? If you are the marketing manager for your company, chances are someone is pushing you to prove a return on investment (ROI), so how do you measure SEO ROI?

You can look at a few things: **leads, sales, conversion ratio and the number of visitors to the site** to start. SEO success used to be measured by page rank, but rankings fluctuate on a day-to-day basis and shouldn't be the end-all-be-all measurement. Being the top ranked site for "buying red chinchilla food" doesn't mean a lot if no one is searching for that phrase. You might find you still get a lot of traffic by ranking for "buy chinchilla pet food," even if you are ranked on page two.

An Analytics tool is a must for all websites! Google Analytics is a free tool that can help you track how your web traffic interacts with your website. This is incredibly important to understand because this information will help you decide what tweaks you need to make to your website to better position it. Google Analytics also tracks what keywords and keyword phrases led visitors to your site. This lets you know if you missed the mark with your [keyword research](#).



Picking an SEO Service Provider

If you decide you'd rather let an SEO professional handle the nitty gritty details of your site's SEO, here are a few **tips for picking an SEO service provider**:

See "Guarantee" and run away!

While it may not be what you want to hear, there are no guarantees in this industry. If you come across any site claiming they'll guarantee your SEO results, head in the other direction.

English is a must!

In order to properly optimize a website, your SEO provider has to be 100% fluent in the English language. Outsourced SEO is almost never the quality of US-based SEO. The simple fact is that it takes a strong grasp, not only of the English language, but also of the behaviors of US markets to effectively implement SEO tactics.

Sound too good to be true?

Hate to say it, but it probably is. If a company or professional is offering a lot of services for only \$50.00 a month, it's probably going to be the bare bones of work and most likely be done using black hat SEO techniques. When you leave (or fire) that SEO company, you'll have to pay a second company to handle any penalties your site may have received because of the first company's mistakes.

Performance-based services

Would you work for free? Probably not. No for-profit company will work for free unless there is something in it for them. Companies that say they don't need to get paid until you get results should be handled with caution.

Go for the expert

Anyone can claim to be an expert in their field, so ask for proof. Check out client reviews. Ask to see what they've done in the past. A [white hat SEO](#) expert is going to make all the difference.

Additional SEO Resources

In a nutshell, SEO is an on-going process. The Internet is constantly growing, with new pages being added and new technology being adapted every day. The definition and critical components of SEO have changed as the way we use the Internet has changed. And I fully expect the industry to keep evolving and keep adapting as time goes by.

I hope this SEO checklist guide shed some light on a few of your SEO questions and concerns, and gave you a clearer picture of what SEO really entails. It's not all black hat practitioners out to spam your inbox and flood your search results with low quality content. Though this industry may have a negative reputation because of the actions of a few, it is still a critical component of online marketing and there are plenty of white hat SEO professionals fighting the good fight. As the world moves ever towards the web, our online marketing tactics must go with it.

Here are some recommended SEO resources:

- [Google Webmaster Guidelines](#)
- [Bing Webmaster Guidelines/Tools](#)
- [Google SEO Information](#)
- [Search Engine Optimization Journal](#)
- [Website Marketing Definition and Glossary](#)
- [Brick Marketing SEO Newsletter Archive](#)