

# SEO For Local Business

<https://digitalreciprocity.com>



# Introduction

Thanks for downloading Digital Marketing for Local Business

Over the past 20 years I've seen tremendous change in the world of SEO and digital marketing. Google's early algorithms were easy to manipulate, so website owners and SEOs either got on board with the 'gaming' of Google, or got left behind.

It wasn't long before the search engine elves at Google spoiled our fun and responded with renewed focus on refining their ranking algorithms and effectively punishing those who had previously tried to cheat their way to the top of search results.

Google's goal is to provide the most relevant search results based on a search query, creating a user experience that Google believes is most beneficial to the searcher and the search giant.

We will outline current search optimization methods that are considered "white hat" and believed to be best practices now and into the foreseeable future.

This isn't about shortcuts or tricks; all recommendations comply with the search engines' own terms of service, and in fact, Google's own SEO guidelines.

By the end of this guide you will:

- Have a solid understanding Search Engine Optimization methods and techniques.
- Be able to evaluate the needs to be addressed on your own site.
- Be armed with tools and services to audit, optimize and monitor performance.

Please don't hesitate get in touch if you have any questions.

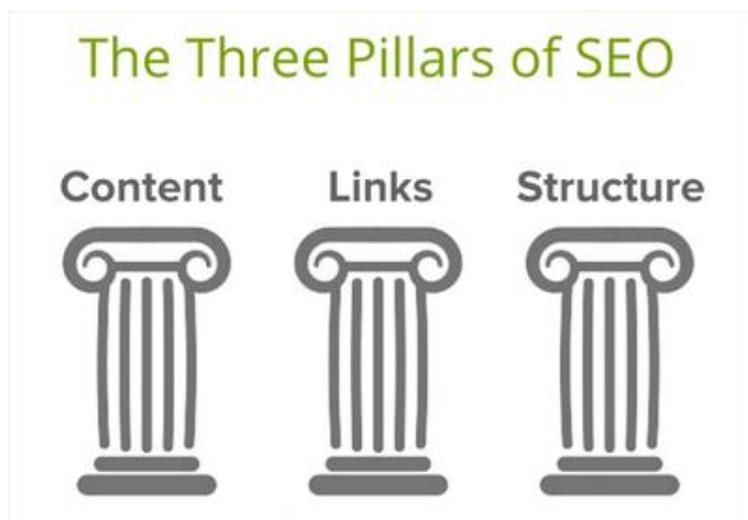
# What is Search Engine Optimization?



Search engine optimization (SEO) is often about making incremental modifications to technical parts of your website. When viewed individually, these changes seem like Small improvements but when viewed as part of a broader strategy of site optimizations, they have a significant effect on user experience and performance in organic search results.

You may already be familiar with some of the topics in this guide because they are discussed regularly in blogs and other resource material, however, they are often times misunderstood or not interpreted, or implemented correctly.

Keep in mind search engine algorithms, tools and technologies change so quickly you may have missed something that could well provide a real boost to your website.



---

**What** SEO involves improving numerous factors of a website including: content, links and structure.

---

**How** By making many incremental changes to your website that give search engines and bots clear signals about content, links and structure.

---

**Why** To improve your website's ranking in organic search results, in turn increasing traffic to your website.

---

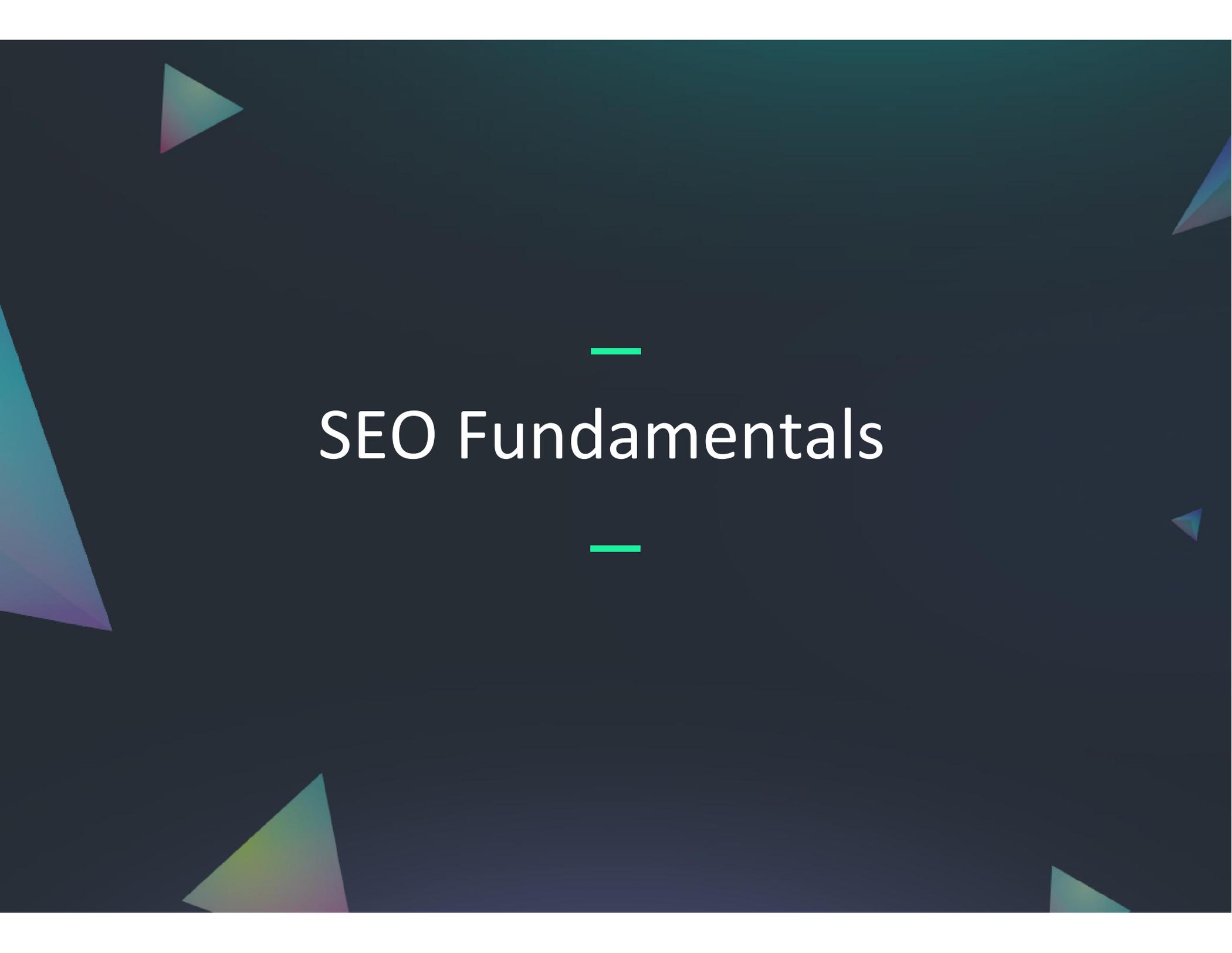
**Who** Any brand that wishes to increase organic traffic, visibility, branding and present an offer to more visitors.

---

**When** Right now! Search engine rankings are super competitive and there can be a long lead time from optimizing a site, to seeing results in your rankings, and surpassing your competitors.

---





# SEO Fundamentals



# Title Tags

## **Goal:**

Create unique and descriptive page title tags

The title element of a page is meant to be an accurate and concise description of a page's content. It is critical to both user experience and search engine optimization.

Digital Marketing | SEO | La Conner WA | Anacortes | Mount Vernon

<https://digitalreciprocity.com/>

Digital Reciprocity is a full service digital marketing agency that works with clients nationwide to build custom digital marketing strategies and then drive highly ...

Title tags are displayed prominently in search engine results pages (pictured above), so crafting compelling title tags help to grab attention and drive more visitors to your site.

Title tags can be optimized to be:

- More descriptive: better for users deciding whether or not your page meets their needs.
- More relevant for search engines to understand page theme and content in order to accurately display in search results.



## **How:**

The <title> tag should be placed within the <head> tag of the HTML document.

The page title is the text within the title tags, in your source code they might look like this:

```
<title>Page Title Text</title>.
```

If your site has a content management system (CMS), you should be able to edit the title tag within the page properties.

## **Best Practice:**

- Accurately describe the page's content.
- Create a unique title for each page on your site.
- Use brief, but descriptive titles (around 65 characters): if the title is too long, Google will only display a portion of it in the search result, or worse, substitute something it thinks is better.



# Meta Descriptions

## **Goal:**

Create unique, descriptive, and click-through optimized meta descriptions

The meta description tag acts almost like advertising copy, attracting readers to your site from the results page. In the absence of a meta description, a search engine will compose one for you from elements on the page. Not ideal!

Digital Marketing | SEO | La Conner | Anacortes | Mount Vernon

<https://digitalreciprocity.com/> ▼

We are a full service digital marketing agency that will strategically drive highly targeted traffic back to your website and measurably increase your ROI.

*An example of a page meta description displayed in Google search results.*

Meta descriptions are also displayed prominently in search engine results pages (pictured above).



## **How:**

Like the <title> tag, the description meta tag is placed within the <head> tag of your HTML document.

The page description is the text within the meta description tag, in your source code they might look like this: <meta name="description" content="Description of the page, optimized to entice searchers to click">

If your site has a content management system, you should be able to edit the meta description tag within the page properties.

## **Best Practices:**

- Accurately summarize the page's content.
- Use unique descriptions for each page.
- Use the meta description to encourage users to click-through to your website.



# Image Optimization

## **Goal:**

Improve image optimization, indexing and attribute relevance to content.

Having images on a page is important for a number of reasons, not least that they help with ranking, both directly and indirectly.

Directly, your image can show up in an image search result. Additionally, they can lend relevance to the page's theme or topic.

All images can have a distinct filename and "alt" attribute, both of which you should take advantage of.

Usually images will be relevant to content, so you may be able to work a keyword into the alt tag and create a useful description at the same time.



## **How:**

Image alt tags look like this: alt="image description "

In the context of the complete image code they look like this:

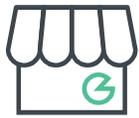
```

```

If your site has a content management system, you should be able to edit the image alt tags within the image properties .

## **Best Practice:**

- Use brief but descriptive filenames and alt text.
- Include keywords when relevant in filenames and alt text.
- Use commonly supported file types: JPEG, GIF, PNG .



# Google My Business

## Goal:

A verified, complete, and optimized My Business Listing.

**Digital Reciprocity**  
5.0 ★★★★★ 5 Google reviews  
Internet marketing service in La Conner, Washington · 53 ft

**Address:** La Conner, WA  
**Phone:** (360) 399-6521  
**Hours:** Open today · Open 24 hours ▾

[Suggest an edit](#)

**Reviews**  
5 Google reviews

[Write a review](#) [Add a photo](#) [Website](#)

Google My Business is a free and easy-to-use tool for businesses and organizations to manage their online presence on Google, Search and Maps.

My Business listing takes up more real estate in search engine results pages and provides an opportunity to add extra information, including contact details, open hours and directions.

Visit the [Google My Business website](#) to claim your listing or edit an existing listing.

Once you've verified your account, be careful to confirm the accuracy of essential business details including: name, address, phone information and business hours. This information will be visible in search results, so it's critical it is kept up to date.

You should also add relevant business categories, images and provide useful information about your business.

## Best Practice:

- Enter complete and accurate data.
- Ensure opening hours are kept up to date.
- Encourage reviews from satisfied customers.
- Respond to reviews.





# Links

## **Goal:**

Build an authoritative link profile.

Link building has been an important part of search engine optimization since Google introduced a link analysis algorithm as a major factor in ranking pages. Much has evolved in the algorithm, however, links are still heavily weighted.

While most of the links to your site will be accrued over time as users discover your content through search or other channels and link to it, Google understands you'd like to spread the word about all the hard work you've put into your content.

There are many reasons websites link to each other. You might link to another site simply because you like it, to credit a source, linking to a friend, or to a desired or reviewed product.

However, it is a common misconception that link quality trumps link quantity.



## **How:**

There are many ways to grow the number of links to your site:

- Create your own unique, insightful, quality content which is inherently “shareable”. For example, original research.
- Promote your content to relevant people or sites in a genuine, personal way.
- Research complementary sites and reach out.
- Submit to relevant and authoritative business directories.
- Content marketing: creating content for another site with the intent to build links back to your own.
- Engage with industry organizations and memberships.
- Sponsorship or speaking at an event.
- Link from your own off-site channels. such as social media.

## **Best Practice:**

- Try to grow you link profile slowly over time.
- Never buy links.
- Avoid excessive link exchanges.



# Social Media

## **Goal:**

An influential and engaging social media presence.

Google uses social signals as a ranking factor. Your blog posts and website could benefit from higher rankings if you are perceived as an authority and credible source. In addition to determining your credibility based on how many people link back to you, Google also considers your social media influence. How this is determined is based on many different factors that include relevance, reach and resonance.

Is your content relevant to your brand? How many people are you reaching with the content you're sharing? Are people engaging with your content by sharing, liking and commenting?

A few ways social media impacts SEO:

- Encourages inbound links.
- Can help get new content crawled and indexed faster.
- Social media profiles rank in search engines.

- Social media channels are search engines.



## **How:**

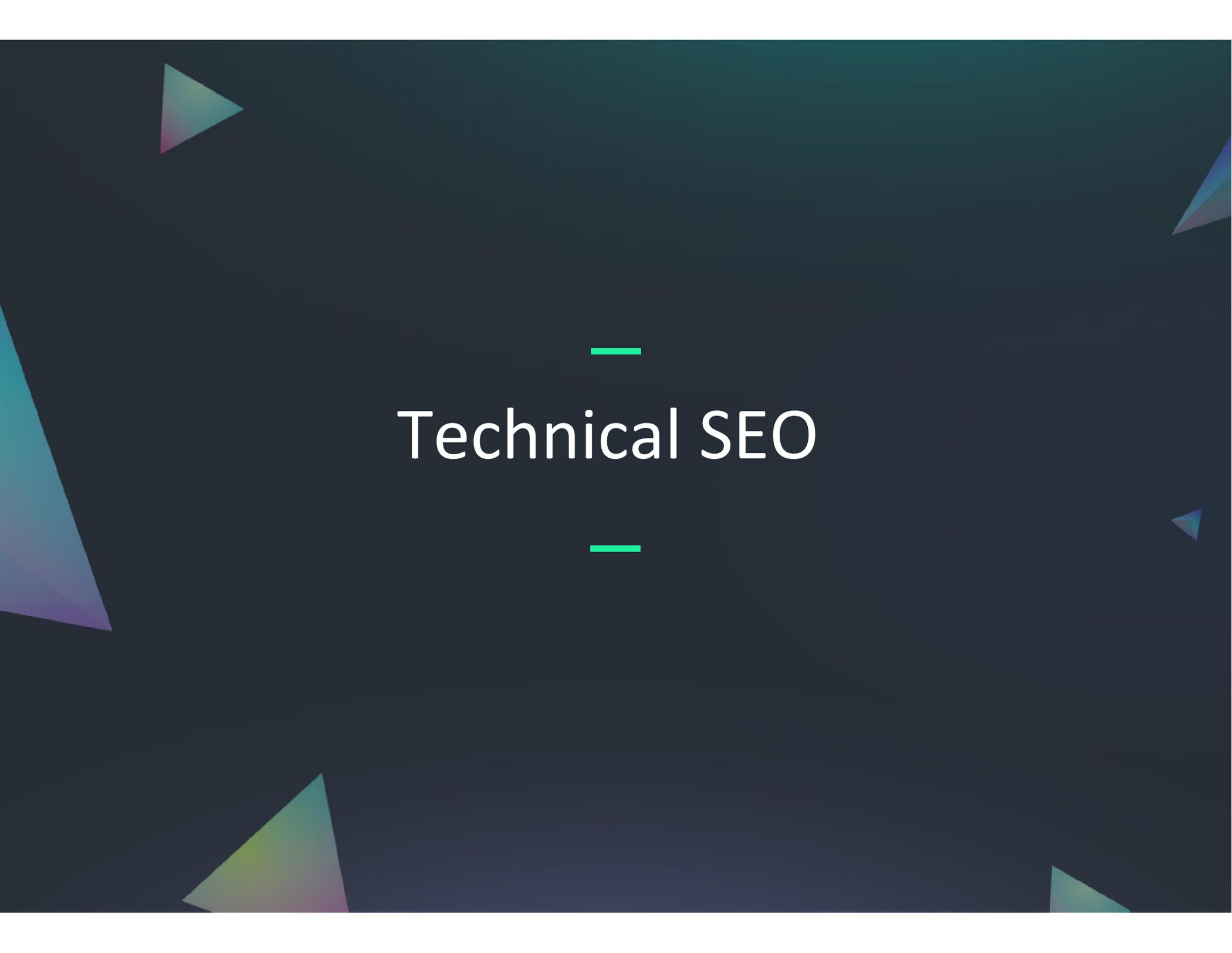
Social sharing contributes to a brand's authority much in the same way as external links. To search engines like Google, any indication of a verifiable external source validating your brand or content is grounds for a small improvement in domain authority.

So, if you can get five people to share your social media post, that's great, but if you can get 1,000 people to share it, that's even better.

How can you do this? It won't happen immediately, but practice consistently sharing engaging content to the right people, on the right platform, at the right time.

## **Best Practice:**

- Consistently publish new content.
- Use analytics to discover the best days and times to post.
- Monitor and listen for opportunities to interact or reply.
- Use the right platform for your target audience.



# Technical SEO

# Responsive web design



## **Goal:**

Deliver an optimal mobile experience.

With more people using their smartphones and tablets to browse the internet it is increasingly important to have a website that works across multiple platforms.

Responsive web design is firmly established as the best way to create a website mobile visitors love, and has become a central feature of the modern web design landscape.

In simple terms, responsive design means a website's pages reformat themselves depending on which device they are being displayed on. This ensures that no matter how the content is viewed it is user-friendly.

Google not only recommends responsive design as the best way to target mobile users, but also favors mobile-optimized sites in results made on a mobile devices.

SEO benefits of responsive design include:

- Content is kept on the same URL (no mobile specific site) which is beneficial for link building, sharing links and reduces duplicate content issues.
- Responsive design improves bounce rate from mobile visitors.
- Responsive design improves mobile search rankings compared to not having a mobile-friendly website.



## **How:**

During a website build, responsiveness is typically planned for during website functionality specifications.

## **Best Practice:**

- Responsive design is Google's preferred option for delivering content to mobile devices.
- Test your pages with the [Mobile-Friendly Test](#) to see how Google rates your site for mobile users



# URLs

## **Goal:**

Use short, keyword-rich URLs.

A URL (Uniform Resource Locator) is the web address of a page on the internet. For example the URL of Google is:

<http://www.google.com>

Creating descriptive categories and filenames for your website can not only help you keep your site better organized, but it can also lead to better site crawling by search engines. Also, it can create easier, "friendlier" URLs for those that want to link to your content.

Does your site have a simple, clean, descriptive URL structure? For example do your URLs look like this:

<http://www.yoursite.com/your-product>

Or do your URLs that look more like this:

<http://www.yoursite.com.au/syourervices/yourproducts.php?sid=12345 &sort=a>



## **How:**

The technical implementation depends largely on the technology on which your site is hosted, and which content management system (if any) it uses.

You may be able to improve your URLs by reviewing your CMS settings, or you may need to look into URL rewriting.

Regardless, if you are making a change be sure to map and implement 301 redirects from your old URLs to their new versions.

## **Best Practice:**

- Use relevant words in URLs.
- Create a simple directory structure.
- Try to avoid using parameters in URLs.
- If changing URL structure create 301 redirects from old URL to new.



# Canonicalization

## **Goal:**

Avoid duplicate content issues.

For SEOs, canonicalization is individual web pages that can be loaded from multiple URLs. This is a problem because when multiple pages have the same content but different URLs and links that are intended to go to the same page get split up among multiple URLs.

For search engines, this also presents a conundrum: which version of this content should they show to searchers? SEOs refer to this issue as “duplicate content”.

To provide the best user experience, search engines will rarely display multiple, duplicate pieces of content and therefore choose which version is most likely to be the original (or best). This is something that shouldn't be left to chance!

One option for dealing with duplicate content is to utilize the rel=canonical tag. The rel=canonical tag passes the same amount of

ranking power as a 301 redirect and often takes much less development time to implement.



## **How:**

The rel=canonical tag should be placed within the <head> tag of the HTML document.

Example rel=canonical tag:

```
<link href="http://www.yoursite.com.au/canonical-version"
rel="canonical" />
```

This tag search engines that the given page should be treated as though it were a copy of the URL www.yoursite.com.au/canonicalversion and that all of the links and content metrics the engines apply should actually be credited toward the provided URL.

## **Best Practice:**

- Specify no more than one rel=canonical for a page. When more than one is specified, all rel=canonicals will be ignored.
- Double-check that your rel=canonical target exists.
- Use absolute (complete) URLs in rel=canonical tags.



# Sitemaps

## **Goal:**

Prepare two sitemaps: one for users, one for search engines.

A site map is a page on your site that displays the structure of your website; usually a hierarchical listing of the pages on your site. Users may visit this page if they are having problems finding something on your site. Little known fact, search engines will also visit this page to assist in discover of pages on your site.

An XML Sitemap is created specifically for search engines and can be submitted through Google's Search Console, making it easier for Google to discover the pages on your site.

Using a Sitemap file is also one way (though not guaranteed) to tell Google which version of a URL you'd prefer as the canonical.



## **How:**

You can use an online sitemap creator such as <https://www.xmlsitemaps.com/> to create a free sitemap.

However, sitemaps created through a website CMS are often ideal because they are dynamically updated as your website changes.

## **Best Practices**

- Create a HTML sitemap on your website.
- Create an XML sitemap and submit it to Google Search Console.
- Check Google Search Console for any issues with your submitted sitemap.
- Make sure your sitemap uses the correct / canonical URL structure.
- Keep your sitemap/s up-to-date and error-free.



# Schema Markup

## **Goal:**

Identify and include schema markup to all applicable items on the site.

Schema.org is the result of collaboration between Google, Bing, Yandex and Yahoo! to help you provide the information their search engines need to understand your content .

When your web pages include structured data (schema) markup, Google can use that data to index your content better and display it more prominently in search results.

[Logitech Revue 097855070906 | eBay](#)

[www.ebay.com/ctg/Logitech-Revue-/97019743](http://www.ebay.com/ctg/Logitech-Revue-/97019743)

★★★★★ from 51 users - \$99.99 to \$190.00

**eBay:** The **Logitech Revue** is a media streamer with Google TV, which serves as a complete entertainment system. With its Ethernet Interface, this **Logitech** ...

*An example of a schema star reviews and price range markup displayed in Google search results.*



## **How:**

There are hundreds of markup types; from toy stores to medical dose schedules. If you have any type of data on your website, there's a good chance it will have an associated markup.

Visit [Schema.org](http://Schema.org) for a complete list of schemas or try Google's [Structured Data Markup Helper Tool](#) for an easier way to get started .

## **Best Practice:**

- There are multiple ways to markup your data (for example Micro data or JSON-LD) avoid using both types on a single page.
- Google prefers micro data for web content.
- Use Google's [Structure Data Testing Tool](#) to test or troubleshoot your markup.



## SSL

### **Goal:**

Implement an SSL certificate and use https://

HTTPS, or “secure http”, was developed to allow authorization and secured transactions; especially important where the exchange of confidential information is concerned. In many ways, https is identical to http because it follows the same basic protocols. However, https offers an extra layer of security because it uses SSL to move data.

For all intents and purposes, HTTPS is HTTP, it’s just the secure version.

In 2014 Google confirmed that using secure, encrypted connections (implementing an SSL certificate) is a signal in their search ranking algorithms.

More recently, Google Chrome and other browsers have begun flagging non-secure connections in the Address bar.

### **How:**

This is usually something an IT professional can get done quickly, but it can be an overwhelming task for non-professionals.

The process involves:

- Purchasing an SSL certificate.
- Configuring the SSL certificate.
- Redirecting your server to point to https instead of http.
- Going through your internal links to ensure all pages, images, JavaScript, CSS, etc. are using https.

### **Best Practice:**

- Use 2048-bit key certificates.
- Verify the https version of your site in Google Search Console.
- Make sure the http pages of your site are (301) redirecting to the https versions.



# Page Speed

## **Goal:**

A site that loads fast!

Speed is a feature. Google has clearly stated site speed (and as a result, page speed) is one of the signals used by its algorithm to rank pages.

In addition, a slow page speed means that search engines can crawl fewer pages using their allocated crawl budget, and this can negatively affect your indexation.

Page speed is also important to user experience. Pages with a longer load time tend to have higher bounce rates and lower average time on page. Longer load times have also been shown to negatively affect conversions.



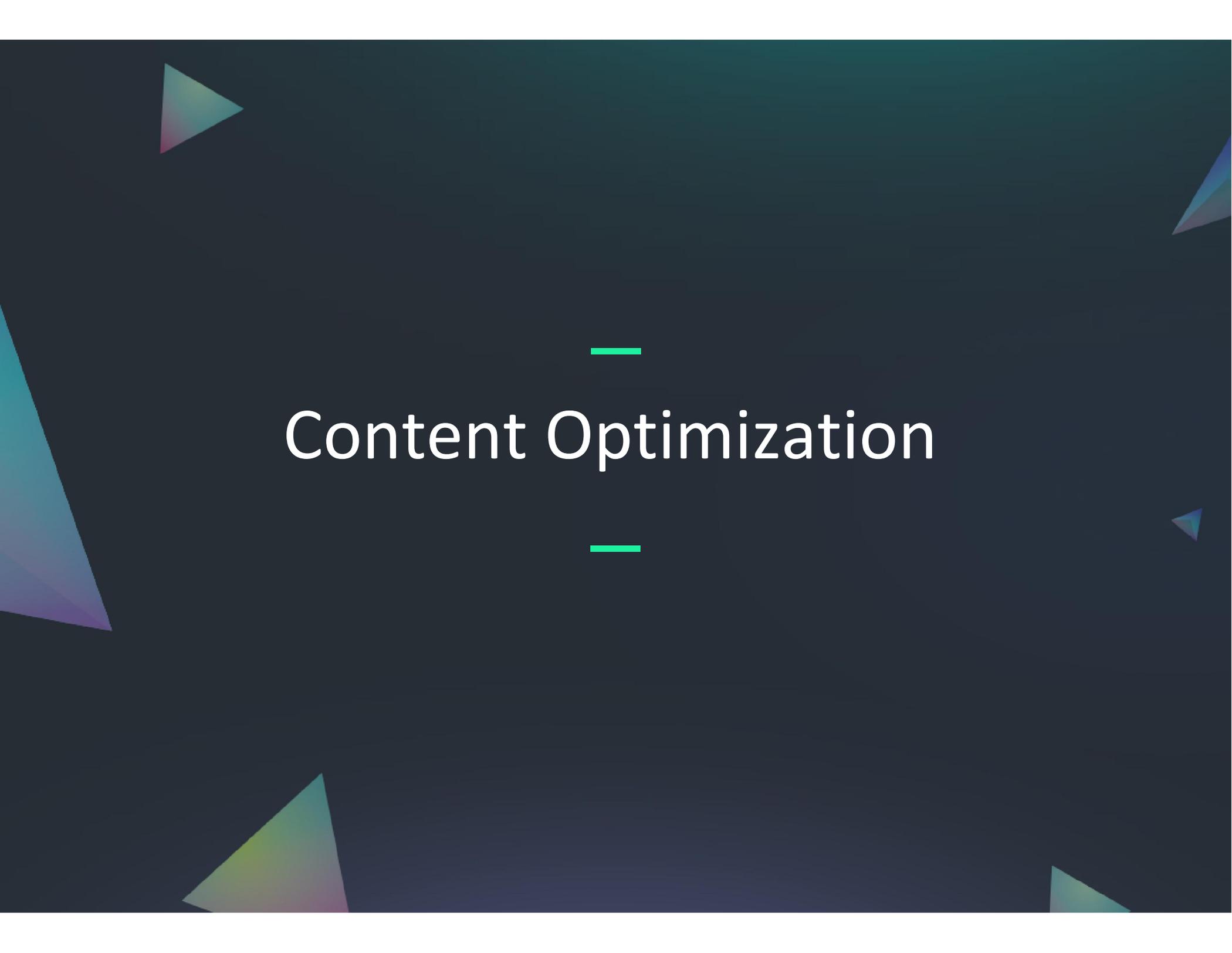
## **How:**

We recommend you use [GTmetix](#) to analyze site speed.

Implement the page speed optimizations suggested and consider using a Tag Manager (such as Google Tag Manager) to load any/all tags asynchronously (at the same time rather than one after the other).

## **Best Practice:**

- Enable compression.
- Improve server response time.
- Leverage browser caching.
- Minify resources.
- Optimize images.
- Use asynchronous scripts.
- Use a Tag Manager to serve tags .



# Content Optimization



# Unique & Useful

## **Goal:**

Craft unique and useful content.

Keyword usage and targeting are still a part of the search engines' ranking algorithms, so we can apply some effective techniques in keyword usage to help create pages that are well-optimised.

While keywords are important, it is equally important not to overdo and undermine content quality. Write for humans, not for search engines!

Research suggests that it's not about raw keyword use or repetition, search engines are almost certainly using advanced topic modeling algorithms to assess relevance and perhaps quality, too.

So it is advisable to make your content as comprehensive, useful and relevant as possible. In fact, there have been cases where the overuse of keywords has negatively impacted rankings, so it pays to be judicious.



## **How:**

It bears repeating: write for humans, not for search engines! If you asked a friend to read the page, do they make comment on peculiar use or repetition of a term or phrase? If so, you're overdoing it .

## **Best Practice:**

- Create useful, unique content.
- Be comprehensive.
- Stay organised around the topic.
- Create content for your users, not search engines.
- Take cues from your competitors: why are they outranking you?  
What can you do to remedy this?



# Freshness

## **Goal:**

Create new, timely content for search engines and users.

Google likes fresh content. New content gets rapidly indexed and ultimately ranks higher in search engine results than old, low-value content. When fresh content appears on a site with historic authority, it'll most certainly generate a rankings boost.

The benefits of producing new content include:

- It encourages Google to index changes faster.
- Fresh, useful content gives users a reason to revisit your site.
- More content means more opportunity to rank in search engines.

Good SEO means consistent output of unique, useful and optimized content.



## **How:**

The most common methods of producing fresh content include:

- Blogging.
- Company and industry updates.
- Case studies and testimonials.
- Product and service reviews.
- Help or FAQs pages.

## **Best Practice:**

- Create new content regularly.
- Use a content calendar to brainstorm, schedule and assign content production tasks.
- Don't copy content from other sites .

# Further content optimizations



## **Goal:**

Consider heading tags and internal linking.

In addition to the optimization tactics discussed in this guide, consider the following items on each page on your site:

## **Heading tags**

Headings are used within website content as headlines and to separate content using sub-headers on the same page. Consider using keywords within headings *if* it does not negatively impact readability.

## **Internal Linking**

Internal links are links that take users from one page on your site to another. They are commonly used in main navigation, and are too often neglected on in-page content.

These type of links are useful because they assist navigation, and help establish information hierarchy for search engines crawling the site.

There is also evidence they help increase keyword rankings in organic search results.

## **How:**

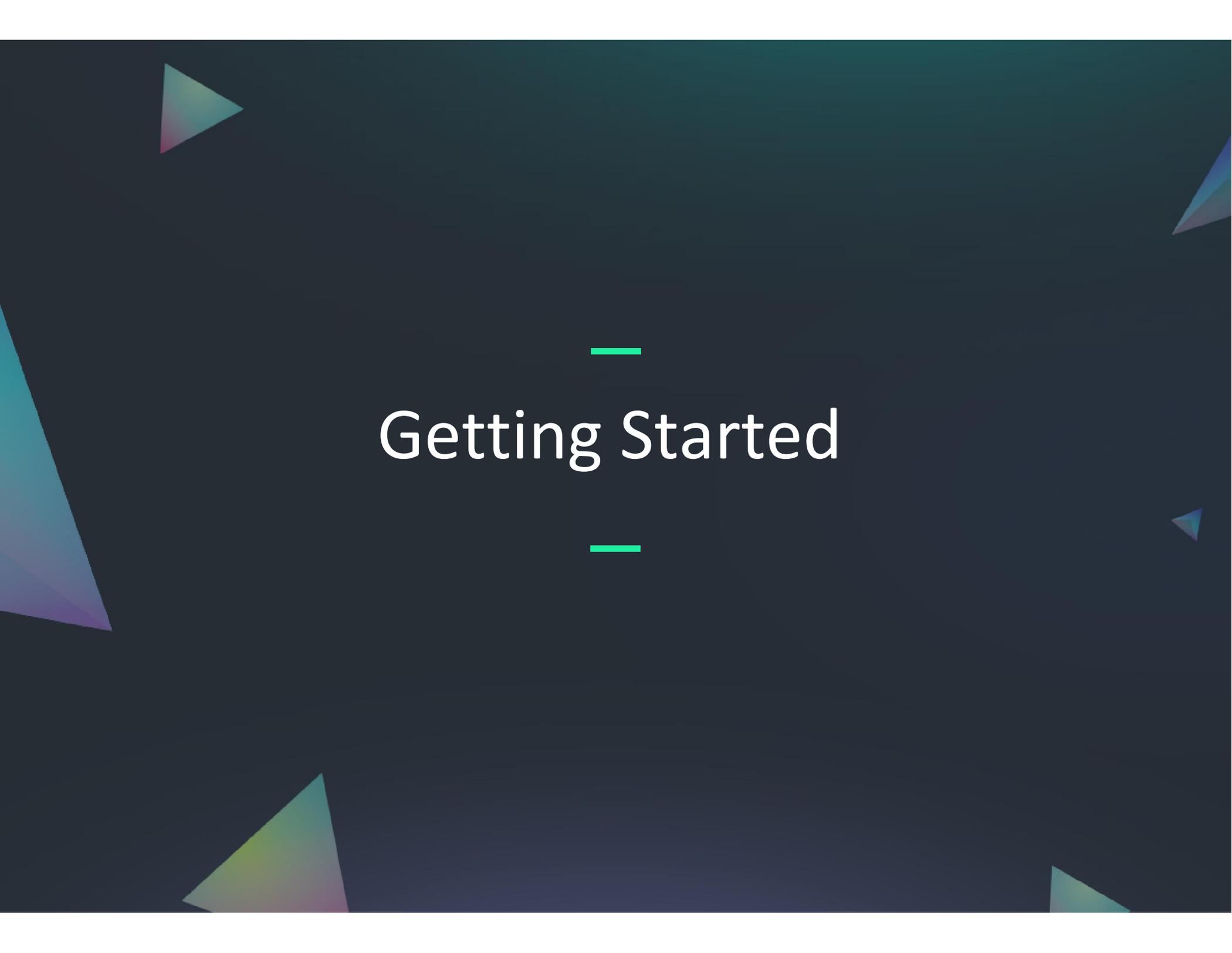
<h1> is the largest heading tag and thought to give the most benefit.

Headings should not be abused, typically you would only use h1 once, for the main headline on the page. You may then use h2 or h3 a number of times as needed.

Internal links are created similarly to external links, except they point to a page on your own site. Be sure to play around with controlling the link text when creating internal links to get maximum effect.

## **Best Practice:**

- Use heading tags to format content.
- Include keywords in headings tags where relevant.
- Review existing and new content for internal linking opportunities.
- Use keyword-rich link text when linking internally.



# Getting Started

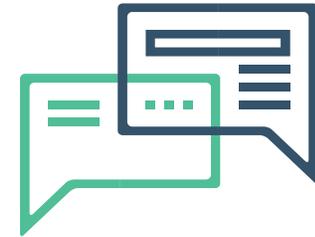
# How To Get Started

By now you may be feeling pretty overwhelmed with all that needs to be considered in fully optimizing your website.

Need some help?

## **Free SEO Audit.**

To get things moving in the right direction we're offering free, custom search engine optimization (SEO) audit.



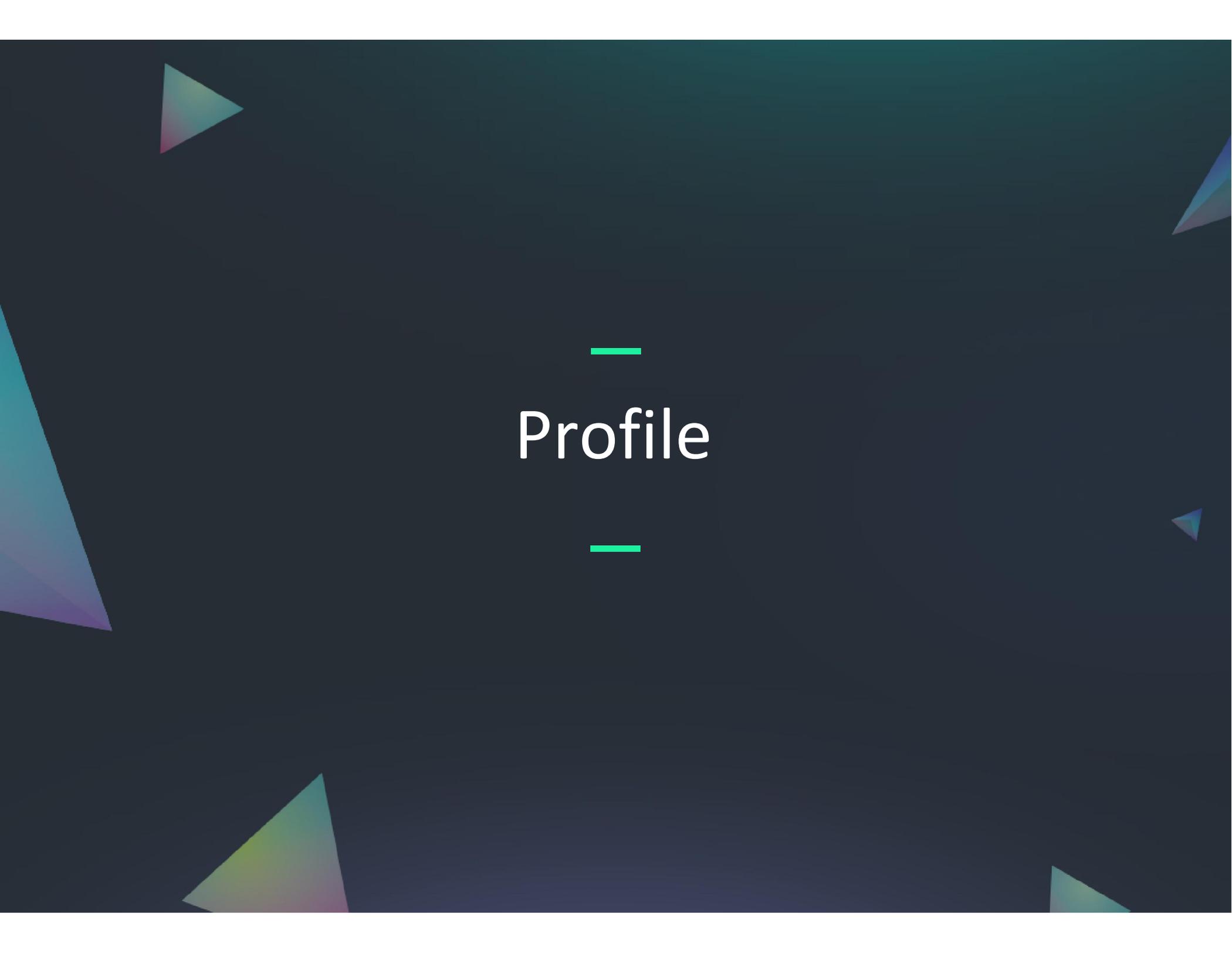
This is not an automated report like you've received many times before, but a manual review and recommendations report based on the items that will really enhance your website's performance amongst search engines.

**Get in touch with us today to discuss how SEO can improve your digital marketing results.**

**Nick Luvera**

[nick@digitalreciprocity.com](mailto:nick@digitalreciprocity.com)

**360-399-6521**



—  
Profile  
—



---

---

*Digital Reciprocity is one of the most experienced digital marketing agencies as we continue to develop digital experiences that engage audiences and drive outstanding results for our clients.*



# What can Digital Reciprocity do for you?

Identifying the business purpose and having a clear strategy at the outset is paramount to everything we do. Then we generate ideas, and develop solutions. It's what we love: collaborating with clients, and achieving exceptional results through digital.



## Web & mobile Development

- Website development SEO CRM
- ▶ Content Management Systems
- ▶ UX/UI strategy
- ▶ Personalization
- ▶ Prototyping Social media A/B testing
- ▶ User testing Video content
- ▶ Mobile app development Email
- ▶ Marketing automation software



## Drive Targeted Traffic Optimization

- synchronization Analytics and data reporting
- ▶ SEM/PPC Lead nurturing Funnel and
- ▶ User behavior reporting
- ▶ Improvement strategies
- ▶ Automated workflows Real-time
- ▶ marketing
- Ongoing support and SLA's



## Design and

- ▶ conversion tracking
- ▶
- ▶
- ▶
- ▶
- ▶ monitoring
- ▶

# Let's work together

Nick Luvera – Digital Reciprocity

[nick@digitalreciprocity.com](mailto:nick@digitalreciprocity.com)

La Conner Washington

360-399-6521

