SEO Best Practices Checklist

1. Short URLs

• Pages should have short, concise, and shareable URLs that let both the user and Google know quickly what the page is about.

2. Keyword in the URL

• URLs should include the primary keyword. This impacts SEO, and users are more likely to click through a URL that contains the keyword they were searching for (or a variation thereof) than one that does not.

3. Keywords in the Title Tags (Shoot for 55-60 Characters)

• Title tags should include primary keywords, again to help the page rank well in search engines and to quickly convey the primary topic(s) to the user.

4. Format Title Tag for Click-Through Rate

• Having a strong value proposition or enticing language in addition to keywords in the title tags and meta descriptions where possible will make your search engine results more attractive. User signals are currently a major ranking factor.

  Review PPC ads for value proposition ideas and consider using numbers, brackets, and parentheses, which have been shown to improve click-through rates.

5. Meta Descriptions (Shoot for 160 Characters)

• It's also important to have target keywords and persuasive/enticing language in the meta description to improve click-through rates. Although Google does not give credit for keywords in meta descriptions, if users see the keyword they are searching for or a variation of it in the description, they are more likely to click through.

6. H1 and H2 Headings

- It's important to have your page structured so Google understands the primary, secondary, and/or tertiary topics of the page. When possible, use at least an H1 with the main topic and an H2 with a subtopic.

  If your website's programming does not allow H1 or H2 headlines, at least put headings in bold, since Google will recognize this.

7. Body Copy

- It's ideal to use your exact keyword in the first 100 words of text. It's a good idea when possible to use your main keyword several times, but it's not a good idea to over-optimize and focus on keyword density. That said, it can be helpful to look at keyword density for a reality check on what is working for the top five sites in your field. Sometimes in legal SEO, we see over-optimized pages doing well, although that will continue to change as Google gets even smarter.

8. Length of Content

- Studies from Search Metrics, Brian Dean, and others show that 1,600 or even 1,890 words is ideal for ranking. Not all of your main website pages will be able to have this much text, but it's an important factor to consider. If a main product or service page can't include this much text, you will need other pages with greater depth, such as blog posts and resource pages, if you want to get your keywords and topics ranking well. Thin content does not rank well and can hurt your website.

9. Topic Cluster

- Make your page is part of a topic cluster. Google appreciates it when you create a "pillar page" that covers a topic broadly and then interlinks with lots of clusters of related content. If you are optimizing the page, you need to think strategically to make sure it is part of a group of related pages to build your topical authority.

10. Scan- and Skim-Friendly

- Making your page more readable can have a direct impact on rankings. Having shorter paragraphs and including bulleted and numbered lists is an SEO best practice.

11. Related Keywords/LSI Keywords and TF-IDF

- Google has gone beyond keywords. They are now looking at topics and who covers content more comprehensively, also known as topical authority. Your pages will become more authoritative if you include a healthy mix of keywords that are related to your primary keyword. This can help individual pages potentially rank for hundreds, if not thousands, of keywords.

12. Interlinking

- **Internal Links**

  It's important to link to two to five or more other related pages or articles on your site from each page. In order to build topical authority, you need to show Google that your site has topic clusters, or multiple pages on the same topic.

  Do not use the main key phrase that you are targeting as the anchor text (underlined words) of a link to another page. Anchor text tells Google that you are implying the other page is about the topic more than the page that links to it.

- **External Links**

  It's also important to link out on a regular basis to authoritative resources. We've found that using two to five or more external links per page is helpful.

  Note: Shorter pages should lean toward having fewer internal and external links and longer pages should have more.

13. Use Multimedia Elements

When possible, use multimedia elements, such as photos, videos, podcasts, etc. "Dwell time," or time-on-site and number of pages visited, is now a ranking factor with Google. Dwell time can be increased by using the above multimedia elements and will also decrease your bounce rate and lead to more conversions.

14. ALT Tags

- Every image should have alternative text not only for SEO, but also for disabled users.

Be aware that the following are also important, directly or indirectly:

- How long it takes the page you are optimizing to load
- Inbound links to the page you are optimizing
- Number of social shares the page has
- Additional optimization for ADA disability compliance
- Page author identification using schema markup and links to the author's social profiles
- Make sure to re-optimize and test di erent best practices on a quarterly or yearly basis, because what works for one site might not work for another,
- Add fresh content over time to keep the page alive.
- Use a striking distance report to figure out where you are coming up on the second and third results pages of Google and take additional action to push yourself into the top 10.
- Pick the right keywords that you have a chance to rank for, or this entire exercise is a waste of time.
- Make sure the keywords you pick for a page match the intent of what someone is looking for when they search for that keyword.

Now that you have a short list, set up a call so we can help guide you through each of the steps.

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