

Setting Up Expectations

As a blogger or small business owner, you have many things pulling your strings. You have 10,000 items to remember and 5,000 tasks to accomplish in a finite amount of time. The list keeps growing, and those podcasts you're listening to at night remind you of the growing to-do list to become more successful in your industry.

I get it. I'm a small business owner and a blogger. I understand the pressure and the intense desire to not drop the ball. With social media, content marketing, audience analysis, mobile optimization, branding, etc., it can be easy to throw in the towel and outsource to an agency or contractors that might or might not overprice their services and might or might not truly understand your objectives and goals.

I used to work in a creative agency setting and understand this more than anything.

It's easy to get frustrated — especially with something as complex as search engine optimization (SEO). But I'm here to tell you that if I can learn the science behind optimizing for search engines then you can too.

I'm not a numbers gal at heart. I am definitely a left-brained person who fudged my way through math in high school and chose a major in college that required using few numbers. After a couple of master's degree-level statistics courses and a year into my agency experience, slowly the numbers game became more appealing. In the creative space, everything is subjective. Data rarely lies — although it can tell a misleading story sometimes — and I've found stability in the methodical act of optimization and data analysis.

Might I be an anomaly? Quite likely. However, I tell you all that so you can understand my experiences and hopefully take comfort in the fact that although you might not be a math whiz you too can learn best practices for optimizing your beautiful website for search engines.

So What Is SEO?

Alright. Hopefully, I've bolstered your confidence a bit and you can go into the rest of this book with a 'can do' attitude. Now, we're going to dive right in.

SEO is the intentional, strategic practice of optimizing a website for search engines (Google being the dominant entity) so target users can find your content, services, and products via search terms.

Google's ranking of websites is based on an algorithm created by the Google gods. It's not a secret per se but also isn't completely revealed. But not to worry. We know enough to significantly improve a website inside Google that its tricky little algorithmic changes don't always matter.

Managing SEO Perceptions

I want to throw this out there right away: there is no such thing as an SEO Quick Fix or a Fast Way to Rank in Google or Grow Your Organic Traffic. Be careful if an agency, eBook, course, or consultant starts talking about its strategies to quickly increase your traffic or gain positions in Google.

Unless you're into doing something illegal – and please steer clear of that route – there is no way to rank quickly. SEO is a long-term, big-picture strategy. If you are looking to gain fast traction, create a social media or AdWords campaign (see Chapter 7). But if you're looking for long-term, sustainable growth that will help your overall goals, then traditional SEO is where you need to be investing time and energy.

As we launch into the next few chapters of practical and hands-on best practices for your small business website or blog, remember that every aspect of SEO works together to create a comprehensive, effective campaign. Rest assured that you don't have to spend hours and hours on just optimizing a post or product listing. Once you understand how everything works together, you can optimize your site and spend an hour or two a month on SEO maintenance to create a successful, visible website.