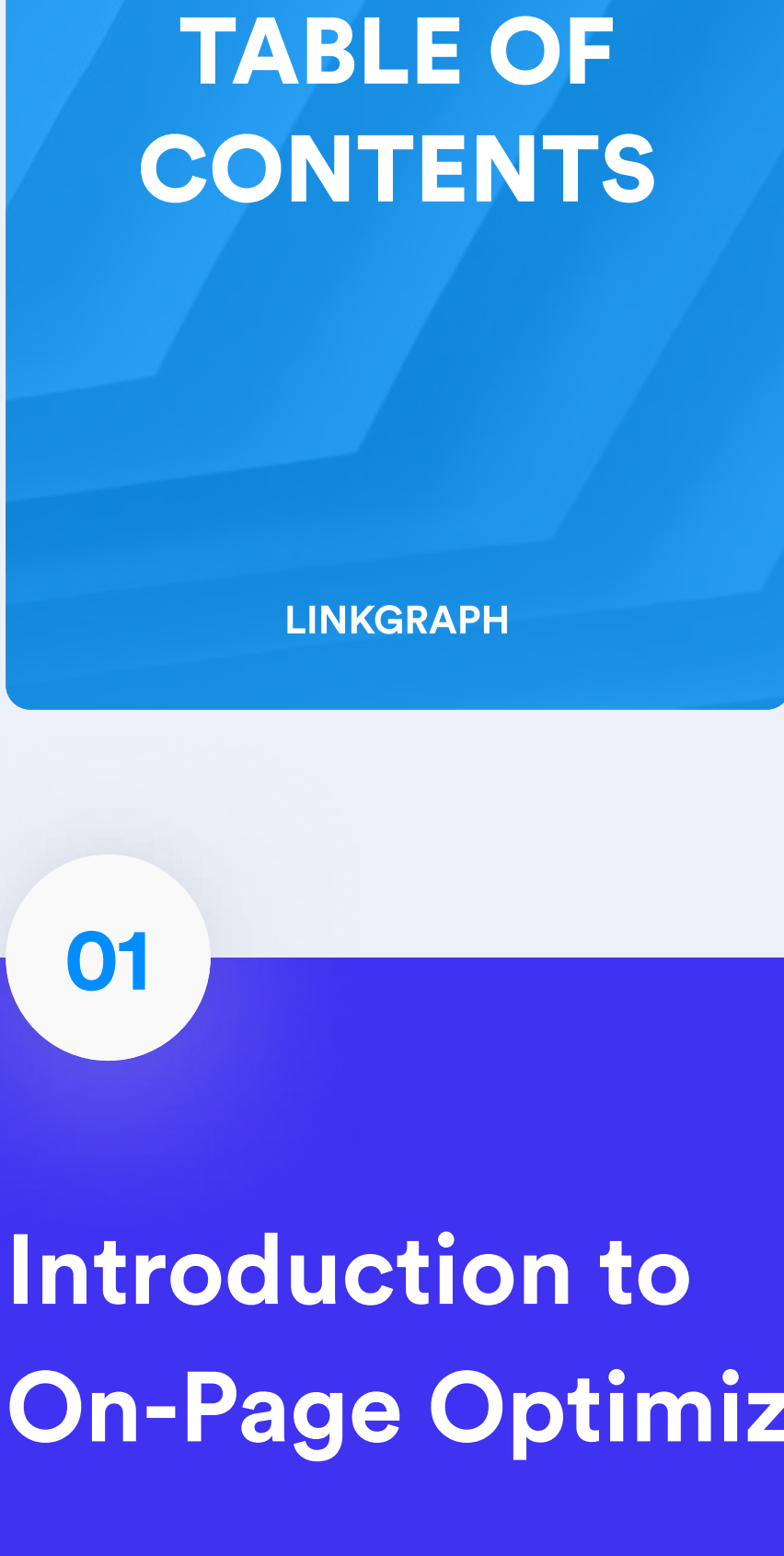


The Complete Guide to SEO On-Page Content Optimization

Written by Manick Bhan, CTO of LinkGraph



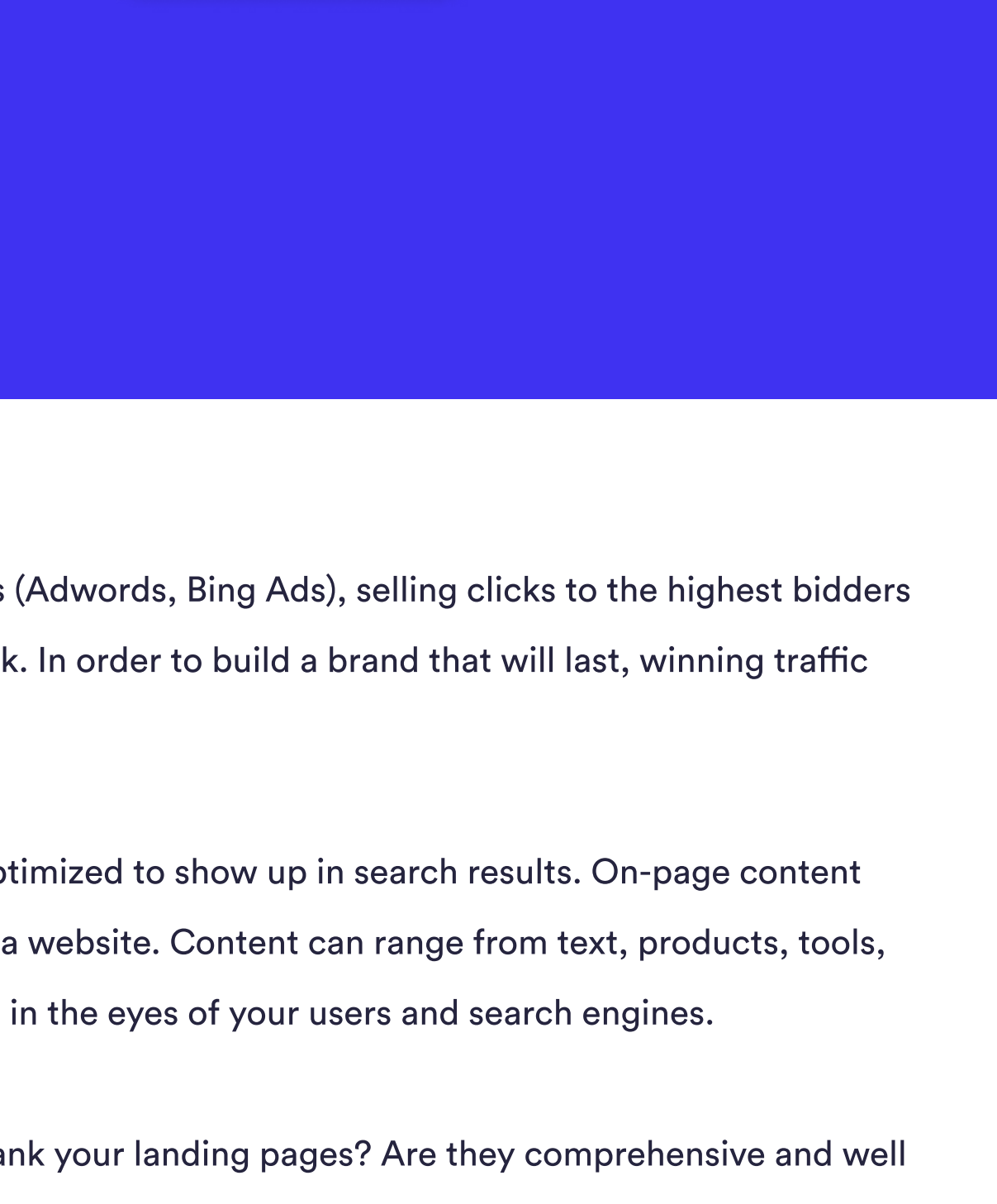
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01

Introduction to On-Page Optimization

For all digital brands, search engine optimization is a required step in growing a business. Over 3.5 billion Google searches are made every day, and the number of searches grows by 10% each year. Most people use search engines when looking for new products, local businesses, or services, so for any business that wants to grow and compete in the digital world, capturing organic traffic from search is an absolute must.

In this ebook, we are going to unpack our strategy towards on-page optimization with our clients.



“Most of the time I see thin landing pages without content or weak information architecture, or if there's content it's fluffy or generic. In Google's GSA algorithm, they score the content quality of pages to determine your keyword rankings. In their core algo updates, they've specifically provided guidance that these signals are important to them. In the BERT update, and even Panda previously, we've seen how important content quality signals are to Google.”

- MANICK BHAN, CTO OF LINKGRAPH

Having the right content and keyword strategy will drastically determine whether your landing pages get traffic from Google. But to do on-page optimization successfully, you need to have the right tools, a foundational understanding of search metrics and ranking factors, and the time and effort it takes to make your web pages worthy of page 1!

For those who want to learn how to optimize their landing pages, this is the ultimate guide on how to strategically optimize on-page content. The larger your website, the more work and time you'll need to dedicate, so having a dedicated team of SEO-trained content creators or seeking out the help of an SEO agency is key for larger and enterprise-level organizations

Why Optimization Matters

Those webmasters who take the time to incorporate the best practices of content optimization are more likely to succeed in search. Not only is content optimization more affordable than paid search marketing, 70% of marketers see it as more effective.

The primary reason why SEO has higher ROI than PPC campaigns is that SEO provides traffic to perpetuity, PPC campaigns essentially let you rent that traffic short-term and don't provide any long-term compounding growth benefits. When a paid search campaign ends, so do the clicks. However, earning a coveted spot in the SERPs can keep organic traffic and potential customers coming to your website for years.

What is On-Page Content?

On-page content is made up of both the visible content and the onsite technicals of your website. This includes any content you've created to be viewed and used by the people who visit your site, as well as the invisible meta tags, HTML markup, and bot specific elements you've added to your site or site code to make your content easily parsable by bots and crawlers (Google Bot, Facebook Bot, Applebot, and hundreds of others).

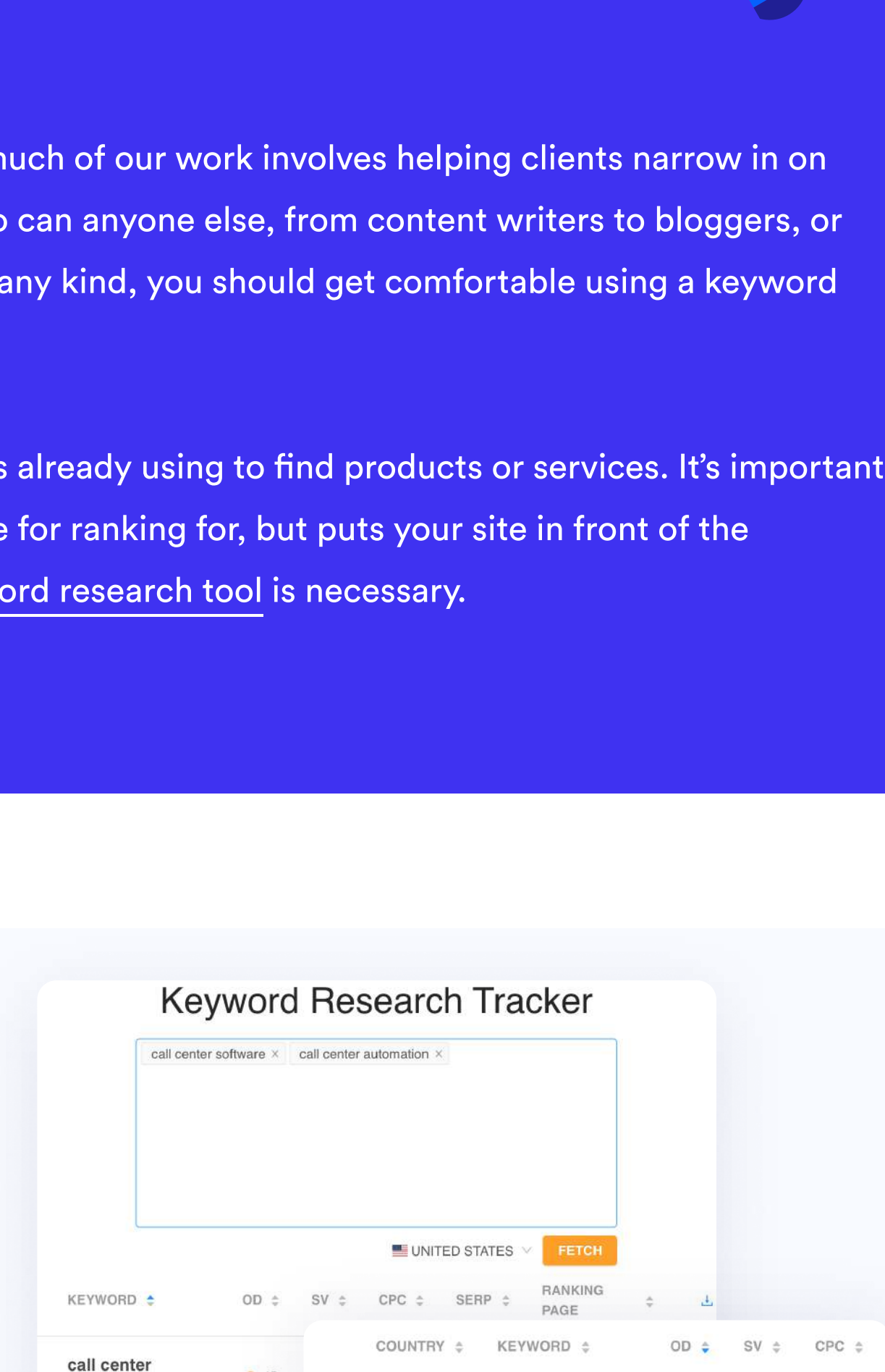
Landing page copy <ul style="list-style-type: none">Grammar, spelling, syntax, and diction should be appropriate for audienceTopical depth: including all related ideas and topics adjacent to the core keyword you're optimizing forLong form content: needs to explore your topic in suitable breadth and depth	Meta tags and structured data for search engines <ul style="list-style-type: none">Title tagsMeta descriptionsHeader tags (H1, H2, H3)Schema.org markup and microdata
HTML/CSS/JS Code Quality <ul style="list-style-type: none">Minimal redundant or unused codeCompression and "minification" of all static filesUsing a CDN for static asset delivery off-webserver.Minimize post-payload HTML DOM modifications (like inserting forms, videos)No render blocking javascriptQuick time-to-first-byte (TTFB) from your webserver	Information architecture <ul style="list-style-type: none">Internal LinkingOn-page navigation like jump-links and tables of contents Rich media <ul style="list-style-type: none">ImagesVideosEmbedded tweets, etc.

Onsite SEO, then, are the optimizations you can to the above components so your content ranks better in search engines. These optimizations can range from changing HTML tags and meta descriptions, to including more keywords and headings, but this eBook will provide you with guidance on the many ways you can optimize your site from the comfort of your own computer.

02

Everything you Need to Know About Keyword Research

Before you start optimizing, you have to do your keyword homework. Keywords can be tricky; they trend, they change, they grow long-tails...yet keyword metrics are the most valuable data sets you can have before you start optimizing.



Using a Keyword Research Tool

Keyword research tools are designed to help you make the most strategic decisions about optimization. By understanding key SEO metrics, you will learn which are the most profitable keywords to target to get you in the relevant searches and in front of your ideal audience.

You can utilize our Keyword Research Tracker for free available in your LinkGraph customer dashboard, or you can find another tool that provides the search volume, keyword difficulty, and CPC metrics necessary to make informed decisions about which keywords to target.

Keyword Research Tracker									
UNITED STATES - Filter									
KEYWORD	OD	SV	CPC	SERP	RANKING	SV	SV	CPC	
					PRICE				
call center automation	45								
call center software	52								
seo tools									
			50		6.0K	\$11			
free seo tools									
			57		1.0K	\$12			
best seo tools									
			78		1.0K	\$13			
cheapest seo tools									
			65		90	\$9.9			

In the above images, you will see some keywords alongside their accompanying search metrics. By understanding these terms, you can make some inferences about which keywords provide you the most potential opportunities to rank.

Organic Difficulty (OD) <p>This score determines how difficult it is to rank for the keyword</p>	Search Volume (SV) <p>Number of searches for this keyword in a particular period of time</p>	Cost-Per-Click (CPC) <p>The amount you would pay-per-click to target this keyword in a PPC campaign</p>
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Understanding how all of these terms relate to each other is another important factor in successful optimization. Popular keywords are usually accompanied by higher monthly search volume, but that doesn't automatically qualify them as the best choice for you. You need to take more than that into consideration when it comes to gaining visibility in the search engine results pages, particularly if you're a webmaster that's just starting out.

The best keywords to target are those that your ideal audience is already using to find products or services. It's important to choose keywords that not only your site stands a good chance for ranking for, but puts your site in front of the audience seeking your product or services. This is where a keyword research tool is necessary.

The best keywords should meet the following criteria:

- Strong search intent for your content**

Does your content provide a high-quality, in-depth answer to what users are searching for?
- Meaningful search volume**

If your keyword doesn't get any search traffic, you'll be optimizing your landing page for nobody.
- Search difficulty should be achievable for your website**

You will stand a chance of ranking for the keywords that have a Search Difficulty that is less than or equal to your website's Site Authority. If you're trying to rank for a very competitive keyword like "buy yankees tickets," try a longer-tail variant like "discount yankees tickets" that is less competitive.
- Check the CPC for higher conversions**

CPC is a proxy for the economic value of searches. For publications and certain companies this may not be as important, but if you're targeting high-value keywords this can be a useful barometer of conversion potential.

yankees tickets	58	33.1K	\$6.64
discount yankees tickets	48	210	

How to Evaluate Keywords

There isn't always a direct correlation between the most popular keywords and the keywords that are the right choices for your website or business goals.

For example, the search phrase, "Discount Shoes," gets 18K searches a month. That's an attractive number of searches, but the competition level for that target keyword is extremely high. Websites like Zappos, DSW, and Famous Footwear have high domain authorities and already occupy the top spots in the SERPs for that given keyword phrase.

When it comes to smart keyword research, the general rule of thumb is this: The best keywords to target are the ones you stand the best chance of ranking for and the best chance of converting from. Every new piece of content you create—whether a new landing page or a blog post—should target a new keyword so you have more opportunities to rank in more SERPs.

Targeting these long-tail search phrases with blog posts can be very effective because they have a more specific search intent and are far less competitive than other keywords.

Targeting long-tail keywords can also be an effective optimization strategy because it tends to result in higher conversions. Those users who rely on long-tail search queries are usually further down the sales funnel and more ready to make a purchase, fill out a form, or offer an email address.

car mechanics	78	33.1K	\$6.64
best auto mechanics near me	68	1K	\$6.24
auto mechanics open on sundays	15	210	\$2.35
cheap auto mechanics	62	170	\$3.78

So I have my Keywords....Now What?

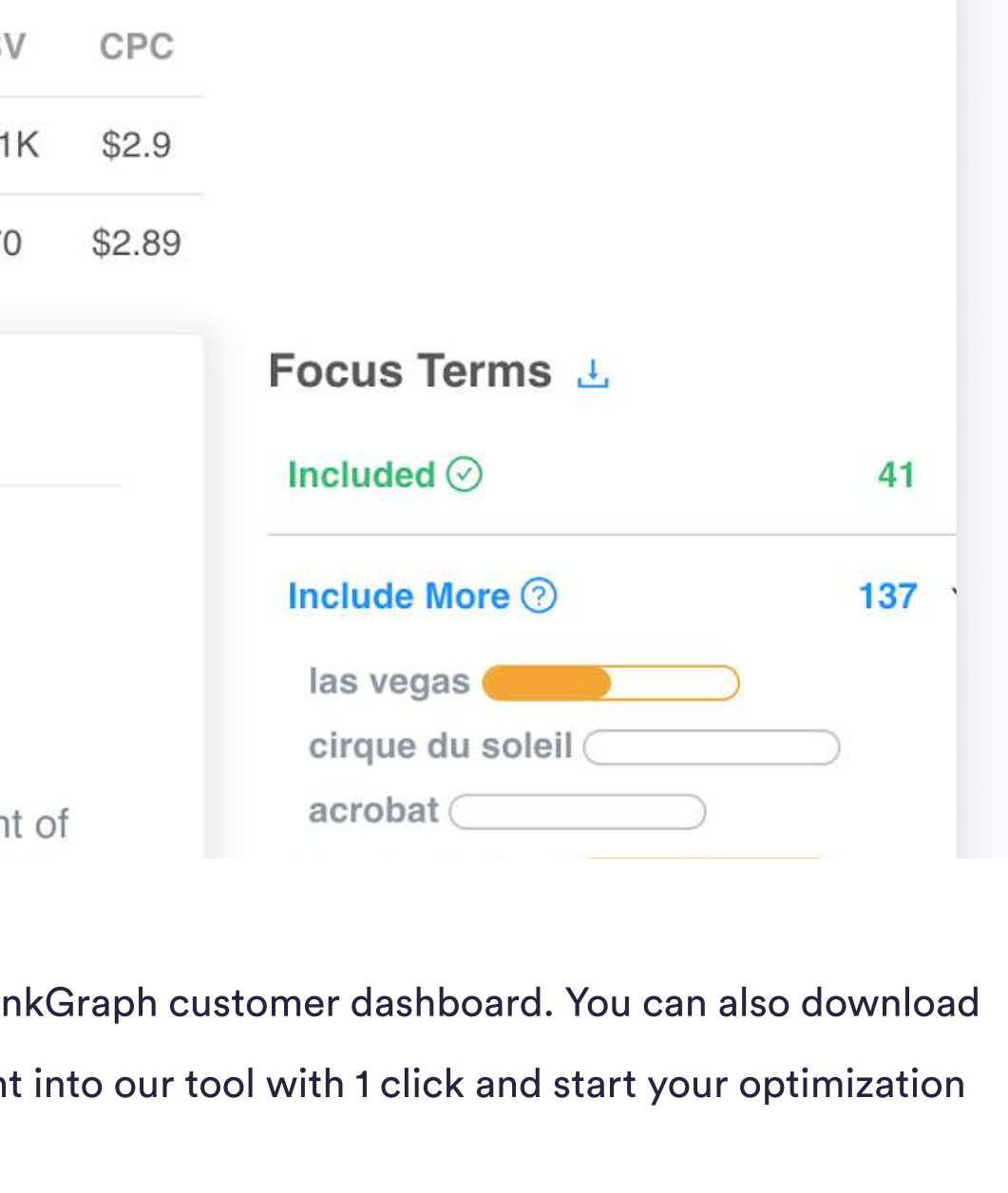
Once you have identified which keywords you want to target, it's time to transition to doing the work of including those keywords into your content. Including your primary keywords in your title tags and meta descriptions is the first step, followed by incorporating those keywords into the primary text of your landing page.

If you use our copy optimizer tool, the process for doing so will not only be easier, it will help you avoid keyword stuffing. Because our tool provides you with the LSI terms that have topical relevance to your webpage content, the distribution of your keywords will appear more naturally and in a way that appeals to search engine crawlers without disrupting the readability or quality of your content.

03

Optimizing Web Pages for Search

Once you've chosen the best keywords, the next step is to start writing and optimizing your landing page copy.



But optimizing content goes far beyond simply hitting a keyword quota. In the early days of SEO strategy, simple keyword stuffing tactics worked, but search engines keep getting smarter and better at understanding the content of a web page.

For this reason, a content optimizer tool like ours can help you include your primary keyword phrases alongside Focus Terms that Google is expecting to see on your landing pages. These Focus Terms are topics, ideas, and phrases that we've determined are related and important to the keyword search you're trying to rank for. Incorporating Focus Terms will help your landing page demonstrate topical depth and expertise.

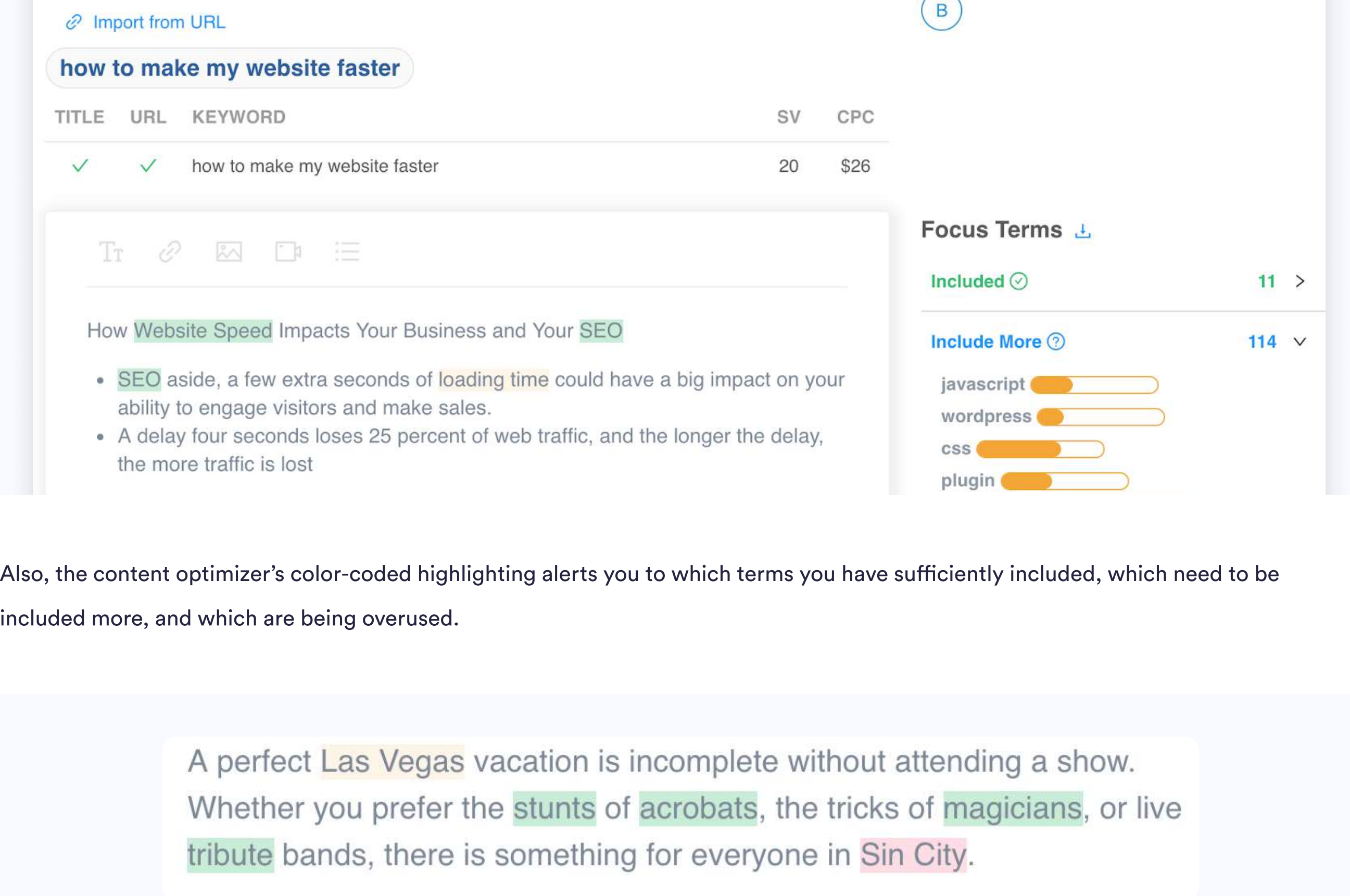
5 Best Shows In Las Vegas for Budget Travelers					Current Score: 33	
URL: www.vegassavian.com/wordpress/5-best-shows-in-las-vegas-for-budget-travelers					Starting Score: 33 / 100	
best shows in las vegas		affordable las vegas shows				
TITLE	URL	KEYWORD	SV	CPC		
✓	✓	best shows in las vegas	8.1K	\$2.9		
✗	✗	affordable las vegas shows	70	\$2.89		
<p>A perfect Las Vegas vacation is incomplete without attending a show. Whether you prefer the Stunts magic tricks, or live concerts, there is something for everyone in Sin City.</p> <p>But not everyone can afford a front row seat to a fancy show each night of</p>						
Focus Terms						
Included 41						
Include More 137						
las vegas						
cirque du soleil						
acrobat						

Like the Keyword Research Tracker, the copy optimizer tool is available in your LinkGraph customer dashboard. You can also download the LinkGraph Chrome extension to automatically transfer your web page content into our tool with 1 click and start your optimization work right away.

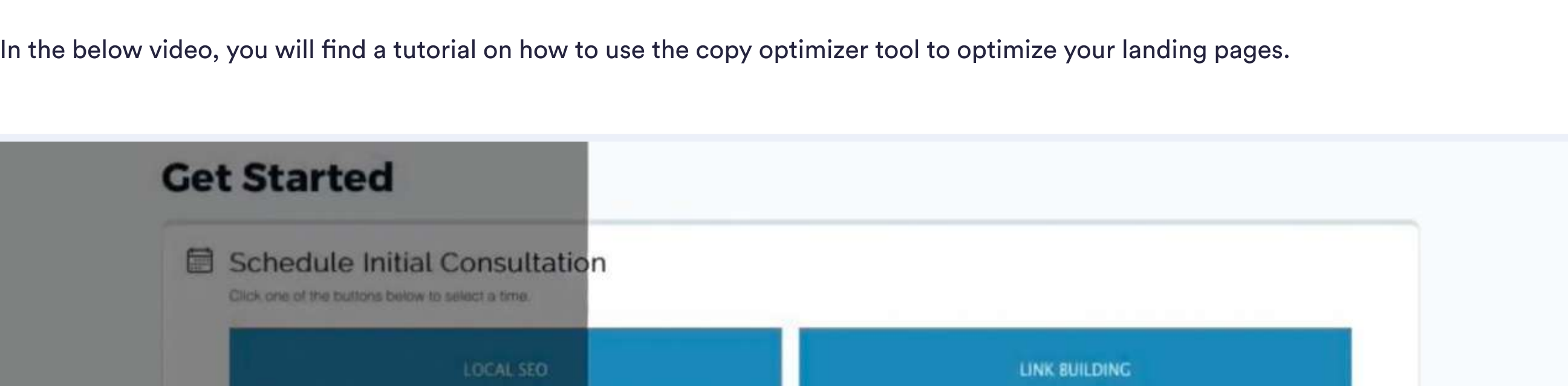
Using the Copy Optimizer Tool

Whether you are creating a brand new piece of content, or revising an existing landing page, our tool makes the process of optimization easy, even for SEO beginners.

As you draft your content, our tool will keep track of the Focus Terms that you have incorporated and will provide you with an overall score. Even small changes to syntax, vocabulary, and phrasing can maintain the readability of the content while also optimizing for search.

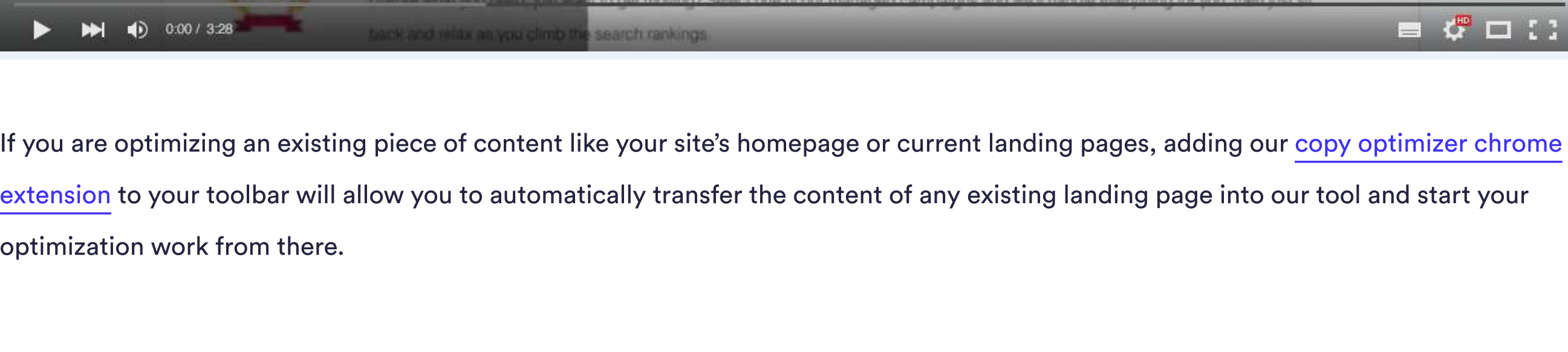


Also, the content optimizer's color-coded highlighting alerts you to which terms you have sufficiently included, which need to be included more, and which are being overused.



And because the content score takes length into consideration, it encourages you to create more in-depth content that allows the space for the keywords to naturally appear. Longer content tends to do much better in search, so our copy optimizer uses 2500 words as an ideal benchmark. The tool will also provide you with an overall Content Score. A score over 80 is considered very good.

In the below video, you will find a tutorial on how to use the copy optimizer tool to optimize your landing pages.

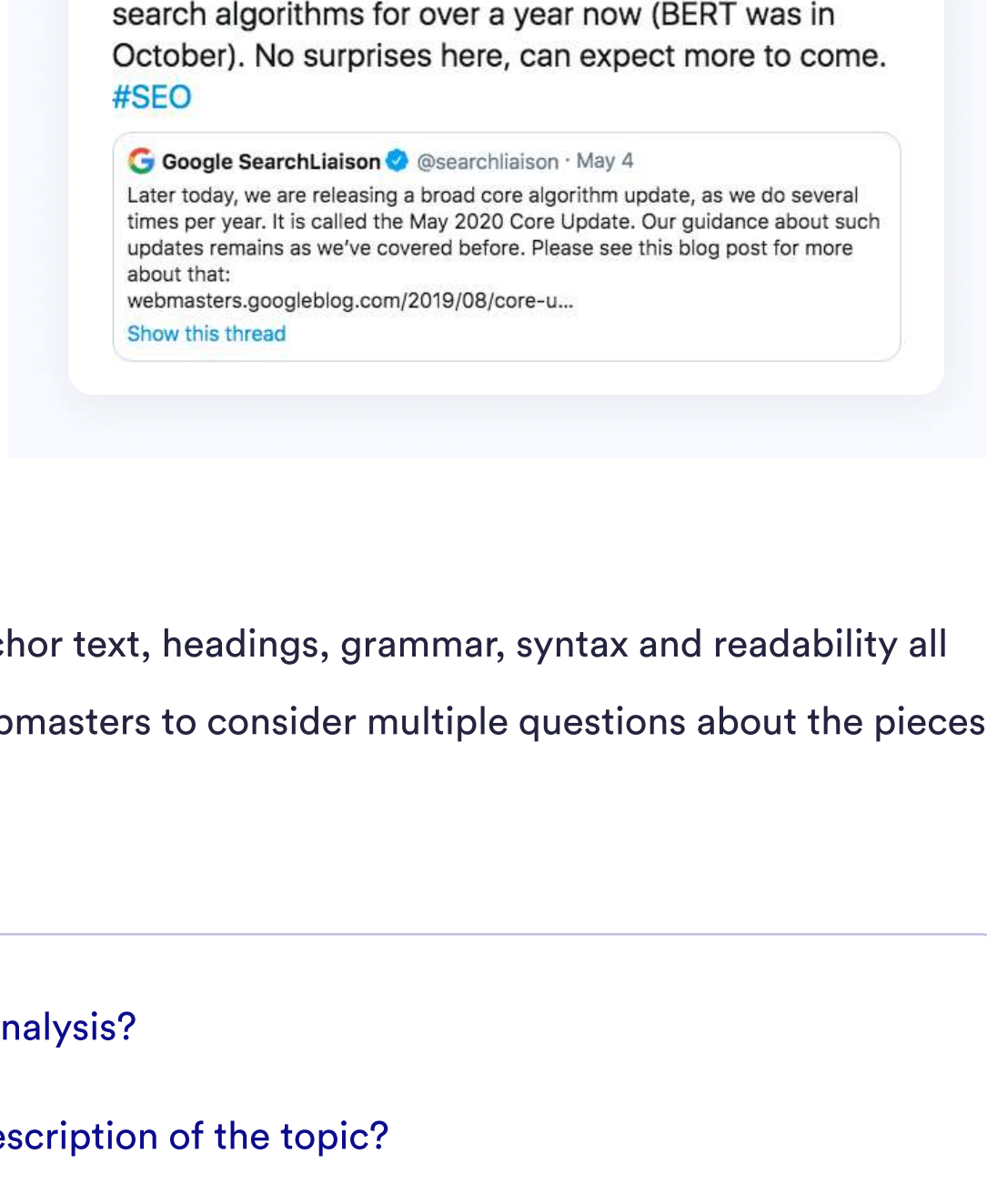


If you are optimizing an existing piece of content like your site's homepage or current landing pages, adding our [copy optimizer chrome extension](#) to your toolbar will allow you to automatically transfer the content of any existing landing page into our tool and start your optimization work from there.

Additional Considerations when Optimizing Content

Starting in 2017, Google's search quality teams have been specifically focusing their engineering efforts towards content-quality signals and have pushed core algorithm updates every quarter. Their BERT update in October 2019 was one of the most meaningful content related updates they've rolled out in years.

Creating high-quality content is essential to the success of your optimization efforts. Google wants to rank good content, and when search engines crawl your website, they are looking for hints about its quality.



Factors like content uniqueness, content length, external and internal links, anchor text, headings, grammar, syntax and readability all influence whether or not your content ranks. On their blog, [Google](#) advises webmasters to consider multiple questions about the pieces of content they create.

- Does the content provide original information, reporting, research or analysis?
- Does the content provide a substantial, complete or comprehensive description of the topic?
- Does the content provide insightful analysis or interesting information that is beyond obvious?
- If the content draws on other sources, does it avoid simply copying or rewriting those sources and instead provide substantial additional value and originality?
- Does the headline and/or page title provide a descriptive, helpful summary of the content?

In our correlations studies, I found that pages that rank on the first page of Google have high scores in our Copy Optimizer. This is because Google loves pages with good topical depth and long-form content. The best pages have long-form, typically-rich content inside interactive on-page elements, like a table of contents, jump links, expandable content modules, and interactive javascript or videos

- MANICK BHAN, CTO OF LINKGRAPH

Additional Considerations when Optimizing Content

What is internal linking? Internal linking is when you include a link that directs to another page on your site. It not only directs your users to contextually relevant content, it helps communicate to search engines your website architecture. It also spreads around your [link juice](#)—or the search equity passed from one page of your site to another.

How does Google think about the relative importance of content on your site? Google uses a metric called PageRank to understand which pages are most important. Pages that are closer to the homepage of your site, like those linked to in your navigation menu and footer, as well as pages that you internally link to frequently have more PageRank. Google uses the amount of PageRank on your pages compared to the amount of PageRank on your competitors pages as a component of its ranking algorithm.

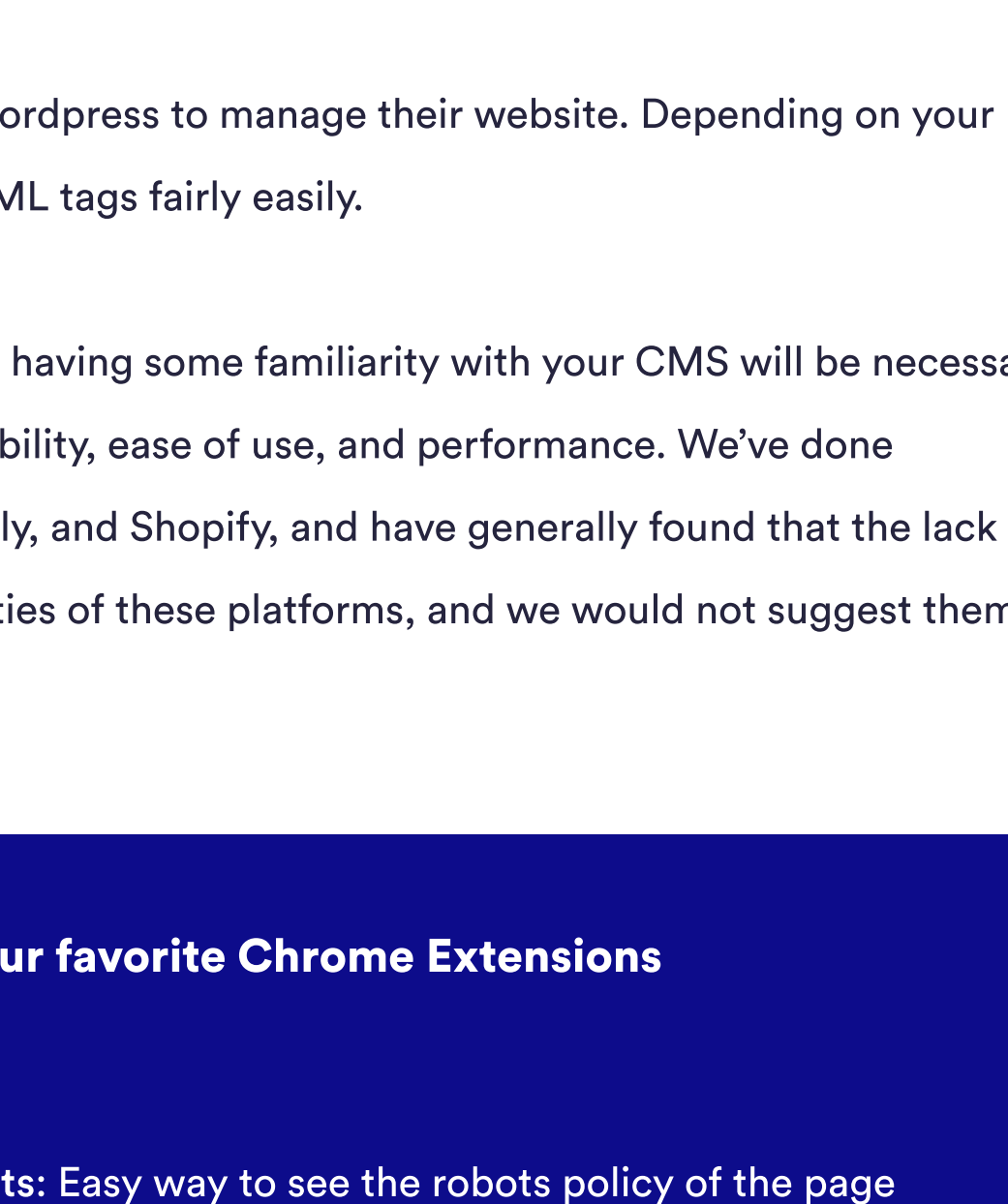
The anchor text of your internal links, as well as the semantic context surrounding them, are important indicators to Google about what type of information your pages contain and help them understand what type of searches they could be relevant for. These internal links also allow you to demonstrate topical depth and authority for your target keywords.

Where should I put internal links on my site? Outside of your navigation bar, blog posts are good opportunities to internally link to related high-value landing pages on your site. Do you have another post that explains a certain concept with more detail? Or do you provide a tool or service that can help meet a user's needs? The more content that you create, the more important internal linking becomes, as it serves as a kind of directory for your users and shows search engines that your site has topical depth in your niche or vertical.

04

Optimizing HTML Tags and Technicals

When it comes to optimizing HTML tags and technicals, non SEO experts may feel intimidated to start making changes or adjustments to source code. But if you have a CMS like WordPress, making adjustments to your tags is very simple.



Remember that when search engines crawl your site, they look to the source code for key information about your website's content and relevance to specific search queries. Taking the time to ensure your target keywords are included in your primary HTML tags is an essential step in seeing tangible results in increased organic traffic.

Content Management System and Hosting

The majority of webmasters use a content management system (CMS) like Wordpress to manage their website. Depending on your CMS, you should be able to specify your title tags, meta description, and HTML tags fairly easily.

When it comes to optimizing the onsite technicals of your website for search, having some familiarity with your CMS will be necessary. We use a modified version of Wordpress for most of our clients given it's flexibility, ease of use, and performance. We've done optimization work inside other website builders like Wix, Squarespace, Weebly, and Shopify, and have generally found that the lack of direct control over the hosting environment and server limit the SEO capabilities of these platforms, and we would not suggest them for enterprise-grade organizations.

It's also important the hosting environment you're running your website on is performant and follows certain best practices. Here's a checklist of key functionality you need to have:

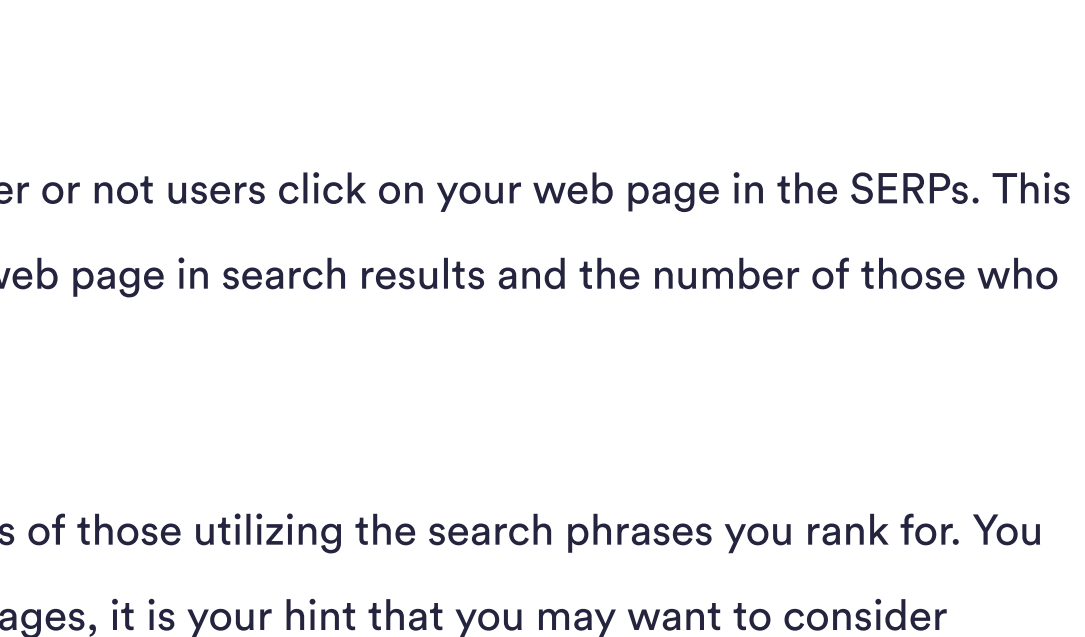
- Automatic site backups** These should be daily. This way, in case something goes wrong with your site during development, you'll be able to automatically restore a last known good configuration.
- Easily add/remove SFTP credentials** Developers use SFTP to push the wordpress pages they're coding directly to the server. If your developer has to log into your linux server over SSH to add/remove engineers from being able to access the site, you're not doing it right.
- Easily add SSL certificates for free** There's no need to buy SSL certificates anymore, so ditch the Verisign / Comodo racket and use [LetsEncrypt](#) for free SSL certificates.
- Restore previous site snapshots within a few clicks** It's inevitable you're going to need to do this at some point. When the 🔥 hits the fan, you'll be happy you can bring back your site within a few clicks.
- Self-healing** If your wordpress server goes down, it needs to be able to revive and turn itself back on. It shouldn't take a developer to have to SSH into the server to restart Apache or Nginx to bring your site back online.
- A separate production environment from your development environment** developers working on your live site? This is fine if your site is small and doesn't get a lot of traffic, but if your business generates over \$1 million a year through your site your developers shouldn't be coding directly on production. Having your live site break because of a development mistake is stressful and can cost you lost revenue, especially if you're spending money on paid media campaigns.

Optimizing Title Tags

The title tag is the HTML code that determines the title of a web page. Here is an example of what a title tag looks like in source code.

```
<title>Content Length and Seo: Does it Really Matter?</title>
```

And here is an example of how a title tag looks when your users see it in search results.



The primary reason title tags are so important is because they influence whether or not users click on your web page in the SERPs. This is known as click-through-rate (CTR), or the ratio of those users who see your web page in search results and the number of those who click on it.

A strong click-through-rate means your search is meeting the needs and desires of those utilizing the search phrases you rank for. You can find your CTR data in Google Analytics. If your CTR is low on certain webpages, it is your hint that you may want to consider changing your title tag or meta description to be more appealing to users.

"Google has an expectation of what a SERP result's CTR *should* be given it's position in search results. They call this a "normalized CTR" by position. If a search result has a lower CTR than it's expected to, Google thinks the result may not be relevant or valid for the search, and it can lose its ranking. If it has a higher CTR than it's expected to, it's an indication that it may be more relevant than other search results, and it's rankings will improve. This is analogous to how their Adwords Auction engine works."

- MANICK BHAN, CTO OF LINKGRAPH

In order to optimize your title tag, you need to include the target keywords you are trying to rank for. If you have a WordPress site, your title tag will be automatically generated from the title you give your HTML document in the designated text box. To optimize effectively, you need to determine a title that both includes the primary keywords and compels your users to click.

- How do I write a good title tag?** Google will display approximately 60 characters of your title tag. According to research, about 90% of title tags display properly. You want your title tag to appeal to users and search engines, so here are a few areas to focus when writing them.
 - Length:** Google will cut off title tags that are too lengthy, so keep it short and sweet
 - Keywords:** Put the most important keywords first, but avoid keyword stuffing. Use synonyms when necessary, and avoid bold fonts or capitalizations
 - Uniqueness:** An original, relevant title tag will appeal to users and entice them to click

Optimizing Meta Descriptions

The meta description is the 160-character snippet that appears below your title tag in search results. In the below image, you will see the meta description from our previous example highlighted in red.

When it comes to optimizing this description, you should consider both your readers and search engines. This meta description should give users a brief summary of the content of your web page and entice them to click. If you are using a Wordpress site, you will find a clearly designated textbox in which to enter your meta description. The CMS will take this content and embed it into the HTML source code as a meta tag.



Although Google no longer considers meta descriptions as a direct ranking factor, they do influence your CTR and so have an indirect impact on your rankings. Google also generates rich snippets from meta descriptions. Those websites with Structured Data Markup can help communicate to Google the most important parts of their meta descriptions to highlight.

You will see that in our search result in the above example, Google rich snippets emphasized the words "content length," and "SEO," in bold font. Seeing those are the keywords we were hoping to rank for with this particular blog post, we can see the tangible results here of our optimization efforts.

Heading Tags

Heading tags structure your web page content for the benefit of both readers and search engines. Although your heading tags are not visible to users in search results, Google bots do crawl them and use them to determine the content and quality of your website. Here is what heading tags look like in source code.

In a content management system, you will be able to easily designate your h1 tag - h6 tags. However, including your one or two primary keywords over and over again in these headings will look like obvious keyword stuffing, which is a major no-no for Google.

This is where our Content Optimizer's Focus Terms terms come in handy. Using Focus Terms in your headings will help emphasize to Google the topical relevance of your content to the primary keyword you want to rank for without having to over-rely on that keyword.

Google is getting smarter every year and can now understand contextual relevance and synonyms with far more nuance, which is great, because it means you don't have to exchange bad writing for ranking.

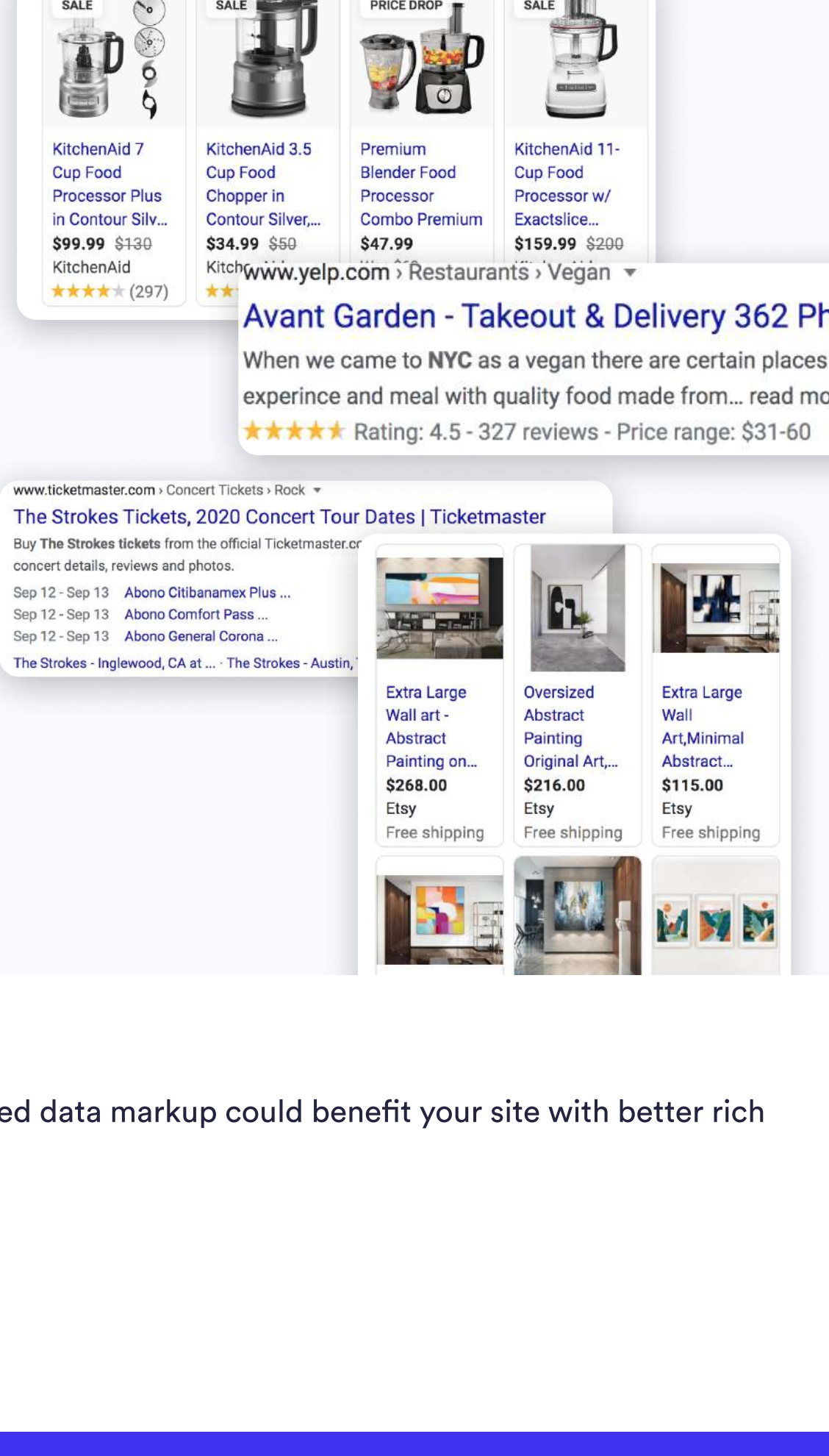
In our copy optimizer tool, there will be a list of suggested LSI terms provided to you based on your target keywords. If you use the tool to draft your web page content, it's very easy to include those terms into your heading tags.

Schema.org Markup and Rich Snippets

In order to make content on the internet more structured and search engine crawler friendly, search engines adopted the Schema.org standard to create a universal HTML microdata format for webmasters to utilize to communicate specifically with crawlers.

Rich snippets in search results, such as reviews, ratings stars, event sitelinks, product information, FAQs, social media profiles, company business details, and even a site-search box are some examples of commonly utilized schema markup by Google. Not every site will be able to utilize all of these, but utilizing the ones that apply to your website can be a powerful way to improve your CTR, traffic, and rankings. Here are some examples of rich snippets in Google search results.

You can utilize our [Rich Snippets Validator](#) tool to get a sense of how structured data markup could benefit your site with better rich snippets in search results.

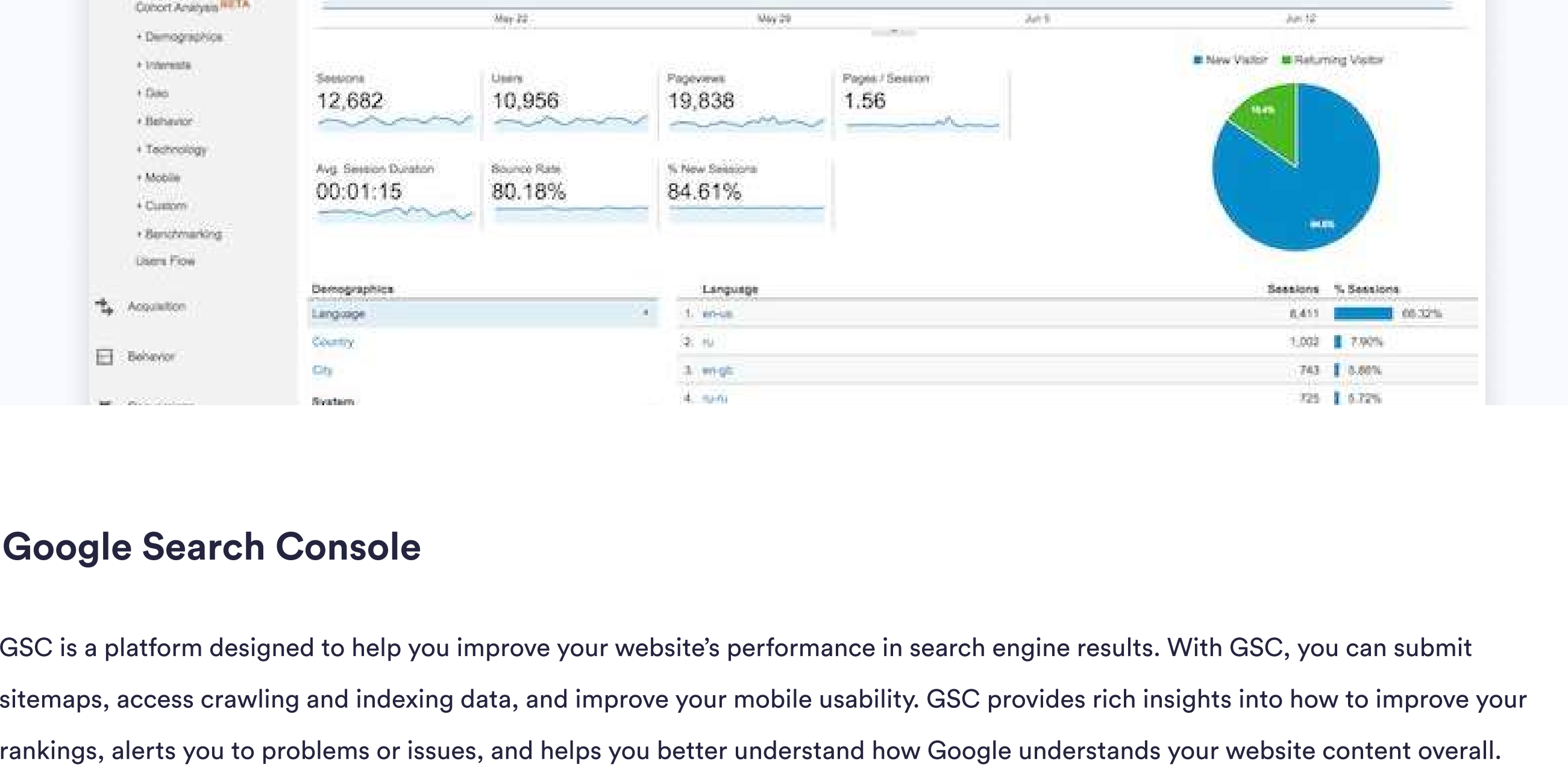


05

Using Google Analytics to Monitor Your Optimization Efforts

You will never know whether your optimization efforts are worth it unless you have the proper platforms to measure your results. [Google Analytics](#) and [Google Search Console](#) are free services that will provide you valuable data about your target audience and your organic search traffic.

Google Analytics will provide you essential information about organic traffic, your users, and how they are interacting with your content. Metrics like CTR, page views, sessions, pages per session, bounce rate, and others can help you understand the impact of your optimization efforts and where you can improve.



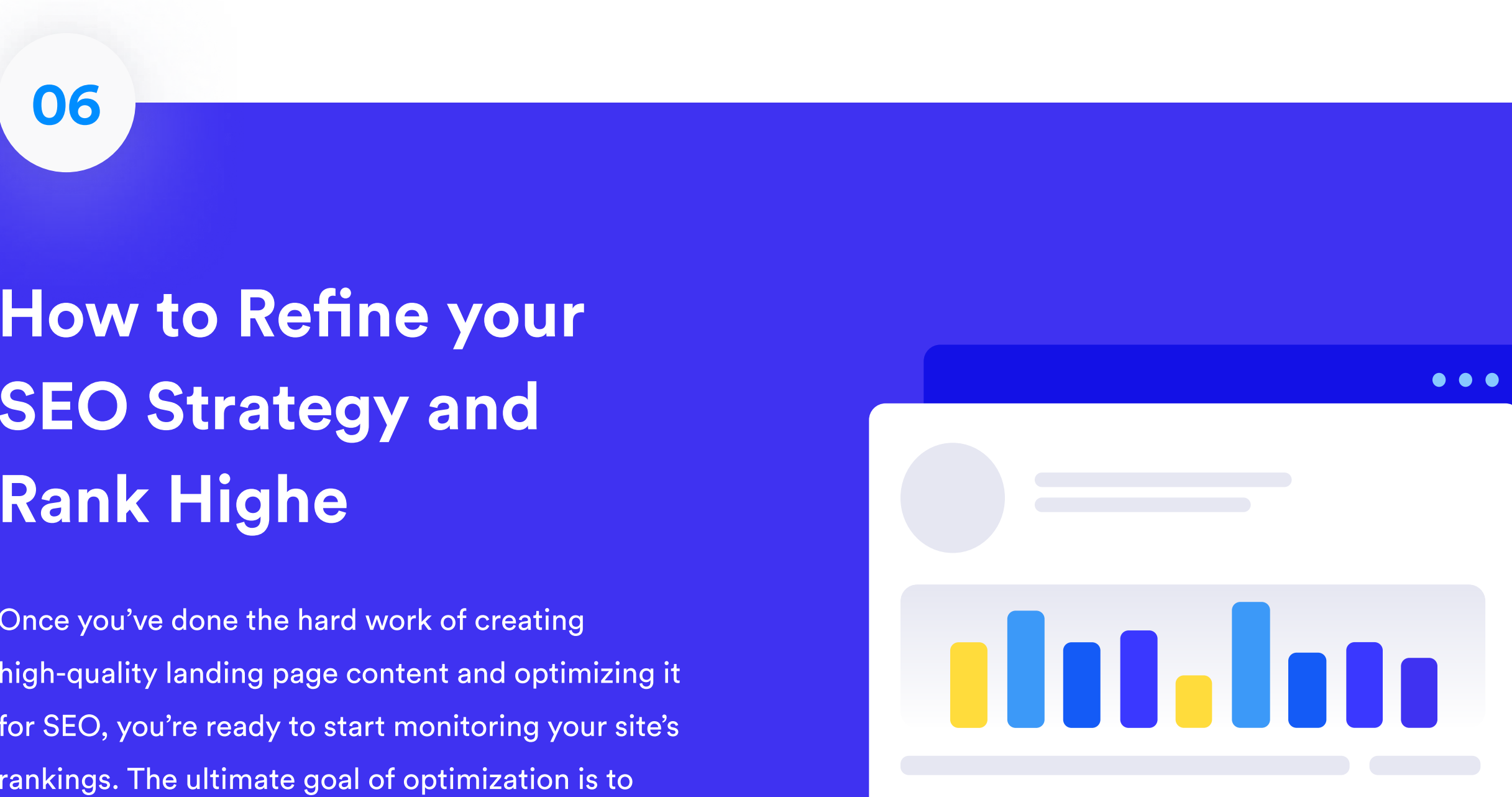
Google Search Console

GSC is a platform designed to help you improve your website's performance in search engine results. With GSC, you can submit sitemaps, access crawling and indexing data, and improve your mobile usability. GSC provides rich insights into how to improve your rankings, alerts you to problems or issues, and helps you better understand how Google understands your website content overall.



Google Tag Manager

All of your marketing pixels and Javascript code should be hosted inside a Google Tag Manager Container. If you're still asking your development team to add new vendor libraries for analytics or measurement, it's time to migrate to GTM. GTM is the gold standard for high performance marketing teams who iterate quickly. Since GTM is free, there's really no reason not to be using it.



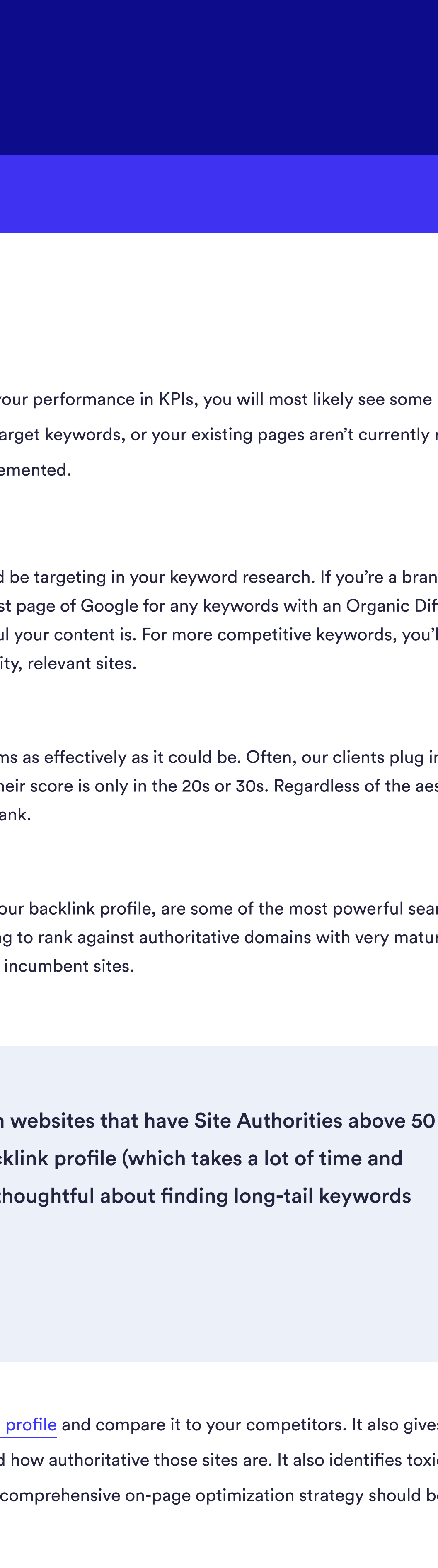
06

How to Refine your SEO Strategy and Rank Higher

Once you've done the hard work of creating high-quality landing page content and optimizing it for SEO, you're ready to start monitoring your site's rankings. The ultimate goal of optimization is to rank higher and more often in organic search results, but ranking can take time... especially for new sites with weak backlink profiles.

This is why continually tracking and monitoring your search metrics is an essential part of the optimization process. Learning how to interpret Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) will give you insight into whether your efforts are successful and how you need to refine your SEO strategy to see even better results.

Ideally, your organic traffic should always be growing as you create new content, because each new piece of content or landing page should be prospecting for new keywords. If you chose keywords that weren't overly competitive and used this guide to create high quality content, you should be successful in gaining traction.



"Depending on the competitiveness of your niche and the strength of your backlink profile, you may be able to start seeing traction in your rankings within a week. Across the hundreds of clients we have worked with, we generally see rankings start to improve within the first 2 weeks of implementing landing page improvements, though it can take several months to see the full benefits of your hard work."

-MANICK BHAN, CTO OF LINKGRAPH

Reasons your Content might not be Ranking

So after you do the initial work of optimizing your content and measure your performance in KPIs, you will most likely see some encouraging results. However, if you don't see yourself ranking for your target keywords, or your existing pages aren't currently ranking, it's time to determine where your optimization efforts can be better implemented.

Your Target Keyword is too Competitive

It's important to be realistic about the keyword difficulty you should be targeting in your keyword research. If you're a brand new site with no backlinks, you're not going to be able to rank on the first page of Google for any keywords with an Organic Difficulty greater than 20, no matter how in-depth, comprehensive, and useful your content is. For more competitive keywords, you'll need to improve your Site Authority by building backlinks from high quality, relevant sites.

Your Content Score is too Low

It's possible that your content score is not utilizing Focus Terms terms as effectively as it could be. Often, our clients plug in their existing landing page content into our copy optimizer to find that their score is only in the 20s or 30s. Regardless of the aesthetic quality or performance of your site, that content is just unlikely to rank.

Off-site Factors are Holding you Back

Off-site factors, specifically the authoritativeness and strength of your backlink profile, are some of the most powerful search factors that drive rankings. In competitive niches where you're trying to rank against authoritative domains with very mature backlink profiles, it can be challenging for new entrants to displace incumbent sites.

"If you're a new brand that's competing in search with websites that have Site Authorities above 50 or 60, you'll either need to build up a comparable backlink profile (which takes a lot of time and requires a lot of resources), or you'll need to be very thoughtful about finding long-tail keywords that are less competitive."

-MANICK BHAN, CTO OF LINKGRAPH

We have tools available to help you [analyze the strength of your backlink profile](#) and compare it to your competitors. It also gives you insights into where your competitors are earning their backlinks from and how authoritative those sites are. It also identifies toxic backlinks in your profile that could be hurting your rankings. Ideally, any comprehensive on-page optimization strategy should be paired with a [link building campaign](#).

Lastly, it's possible your website is not providing an optimal user experience or has slow page load times. Google tracks the user experience of people browsing your site as well as your site's performance through data it collects inside Google Chrome.

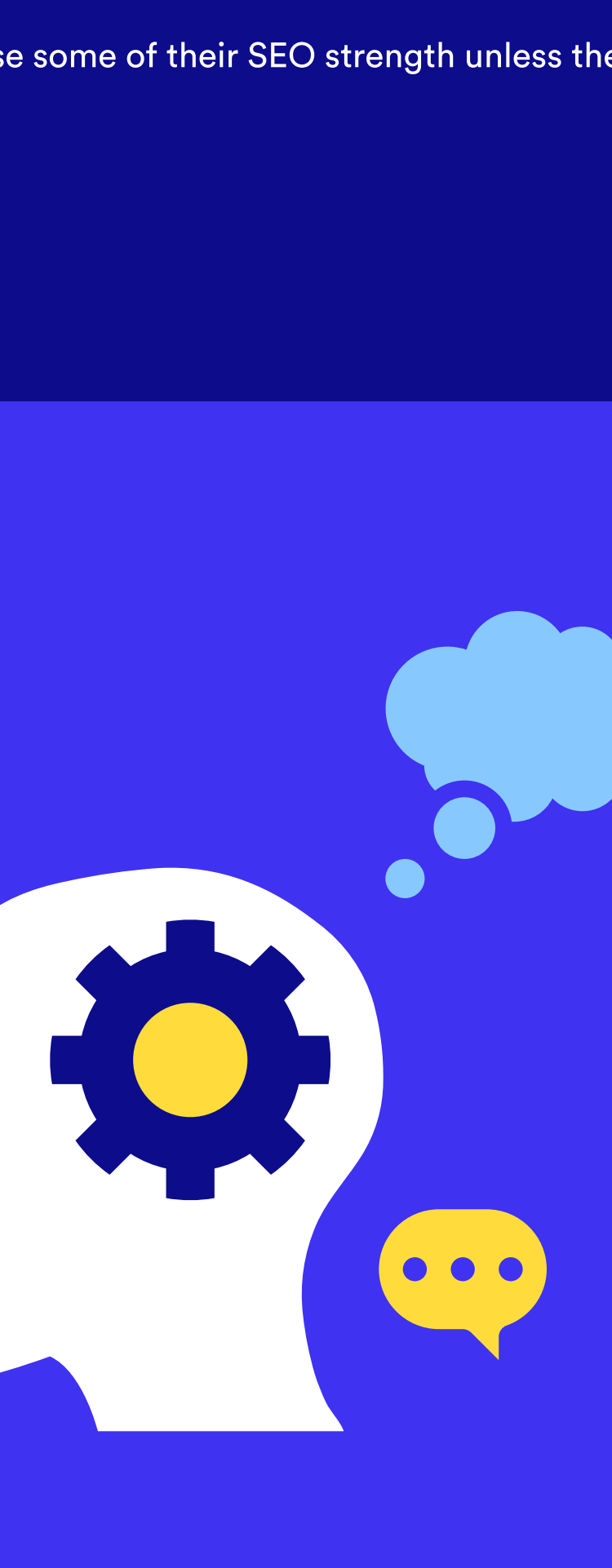
Google actually provides insights into this as aggregated metrics inside the Chrome User Experience Report. They've also provided the PageSpeed Insights tool to allow webmasters to profile the onsite performance of their website and identify technical issues affecting their site's performance. Google also sometimes exposes information about usability issues it has identified on your website inside Google Search Console.

07

After you Optimize: How to Keep Driving Traffic and Conversions

Increased organic traffic is a major goal of optimization, but the ultimate end-goal is driving traffic to your website that actually converts.

Although creating new content for more keyword phrases will always be on your content marketers' to-do lists, taking the time to update and capitalize on existing content, particularly those landing pages that have accumulated backlinks, earn traffic, and capture leads, can be a quick, easy way to turn your optimization efforts into increased traffic and revenue.



Capitalize on your Best Performing Content with your XML Sitemap

If you have landing pages on your site that have proved to drive traffic and convert, one of the best ways to capitalize on those pages is to include them in your sitemap.

A sitemap is an HTML page that lists all of the important pages on your website. It's good to be selective here and not include every page on your site - start with just the most important landing pages that you want to rank well. Submitting a sitemap is a way to help search engines crawl your site more efficiently.

For any website, there are bound to be pages that have more utilitarian purposes (log-ins, shopping carts, etc.) that don't bring value to every user. For this reason, helping search engines understand the hierarchy of your site has the benefits of guiding the traffic you get from search to the most valuable content your website offers.

```
<?xml version="1.0" encoding="UTF-8"?>
<sitemap xmlns="http://www.sitemaps.org/schemas/sitemap-0.9" xmlns:xsi="http://www.w3.org/2001/XMLSchema-instance" xsi:schemaLocation="http://www.sitemaps.org/schemas/sitemap-0.9 http://www.sitemaps.org/schemas/sitemap-0.9/sitemap.xsd">
  <url>
    <loc>http://www.lightedimage.co/</loc>
    <lastmod>2017-01-01</lastmod>
    <changefreq>daily</changefreq>
    <priority>1.0</priority>
  </url>
  <url>
    <loc>http://www.lightedimage.co/shipping-center</loc>
    <lastmod>2017-01-01</lastmod>
    <changefreq>daily</changefreq>
    <priority>1.0</priority>
  </url>
  <url>
    <loc>http://www.lightedimage.co/about/</loc>
    <lastmod>2017-01-01</lastmod>
    <changefreq>daily</changefreq>
    <priority>1.0</priority>
  </url>
  <url>
    <loc>http://www.lightedimage.co/contact/</loc>
    <lastmod>2017-01-01</lastmod>
    <changefreq>daily</changefreq>
    <priority>1.0</priority>
  </url>
  <url>
    <loc>http://www.lightedimage.co/faq/</loc>
    <lastmod>2017-01-01</lastmod>
    <changefreq>daily</changefreq>
    <priority>1.0</priority>
  </url>
  <url>
    <loc>http://www.lightedimage.co/installation/</loc>
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    <changefreq>daily</changefreq>
    <priority>1.0</priority>
  </url>
  <url>
    <loc>http://www.lightedimage.co/blog/</loc>
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    <changefreq>daily</changefreq>
    <priority>1.0</priority>
  </url>
  <url>
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    <lastmod>2017-01-01</lastmod>
    <changefreq>daily</changefreq>
    <priority>1.0</priority>
  </url>
  <url>
    <loc>http://www.lightedimage.co/wakeup-mirror/</loc>
    <lastmod>2017-01-01</lastmod>
    <changefreq>daily</changefreq>
    <priority>1.0</priority>
  </url>
</sitemap>
```

Although there are tools to help you put a sitemap together, bringing in an SEO expert is a good idea with this crucial step. A properly engineered sitemap can work to your advantage by guiding organic traffic to the best performing pages on your site, like those that result in conversions or lead captures.

Using a sitemap is extremely important when you have a new site or are adding many new landing pages, as it keeps Google informed of the changes you've made and helps search engine bots crawl and index your site in a way that most benefits you.

Add Lead Captures to Pages with High Traffic but Low Conversions

If you have a web page that starts to get organic traffic but doesn't include some kind of lead capture form or call-to-action (CTA), you are missing an opportunity to see increased ROI on your optimization efforts. A refined content strategy prioritizes conversions, as they help turn your increased site traffic into revenue.

Target Under-Performing Content toward Less Competitive Search Queries

By re-optimizing content to target less competitive keywords, content optimizers have the opportunity to go after new search queries without the work of creating an entirely new long-form landing page or blog post.

You should be monitoring whether or not the content you create is ranking for the original target keywords. If not, consider a new keyword and reevaluate at a later date. But be careful with this strategy. Often, your pages may start ranking for keywords you didn't expect but that still bring valuable traffic to your site.

Let Backlinks be your Guide

If you have a web page that starts to accumulate backlinks, that's your hint that users have found the content of that page to be valuable and higher quality. If a page with multiple backlinks starts losing traffic overtime, you can put that content back to work by updating the content every 6-12 months.

Repairing broken links, revising outdated information, or expanding on the topic with more detail and depth can put that content back to work for you. Just make sure that you never delete pages that have backlinks or high PageRank, so as not to lose any valuable [link juice](#).

Content Pruning: Delete content that's underperforming

All content creation takes work, which is why some webmasters hesitate to delete any content from their sites. Although it's best practice to have a variety of landing pages and blog posts on your website, pages that aren't getting traffic or ranking are just taking up valuable pagerank and crawl budget. They should either be re-optimized for a less competitive keyword or removed entirely. For some sites with a large number of low value pages, pruning pages can actually improve your SEO and rankings on other pages.

If you don't want to delete a page entirely, you can make it invisible by utilizing a [301 redirect](#). You can use the redirect to automatically send users to related, or better performing content. If you don't have a piece of content that can serve as a good substitute for the page, then it's best to use a [410 Deleted](#) status to communicate that the url is gone permanently.

When should you Re-Optimize your Content?

As your site grows over time, search trends and algorithms will change. The keywords that brought you traffic a year ago may become more competitive, or the blog content that once seemed "fresh," may go stale. In Google's massive index of all content, stale content unfortunately has a short shelf-life.

Most content marketers strive to make "evergreen content" for this reason, or web pages that stand the test of time and work to drive traffic for the long haul. But the truth is, older blog posts and landing pages will always lose some of their SEO strength unless they are kept up-to-date, relevant, and appear to be updated regularly.

08

Final Thoughts on Optimization

SEO is one of the most cost-effective ways for you to experience growth and increased ROI with your digital marketing efforts. When your website ranks in the top spots for SERPs, you build brand credibility, capture more leads, and increase your market share. Although it takes consistency and investment, the rewards for your brand can be long-lasting promotion and a steady influx of leads.

After reading this guide, you should have the necessary tools and procedures to strategize, optimize, and refine your on-page strategy. If you need help diagnosing which on-page optimizations your website should prioritize, consider doing an [on-site SEO audit](#).

At LinkGraph, we have a blog and learning center that provides various nuanced guides about both on-site and off-site tactics. Our experts are always willing to [chat](#) about your website and revenue goals. We believe that SEO should be for everyone, and can't wait to see how your website grows.

