

ECOMMERCE MARKETING

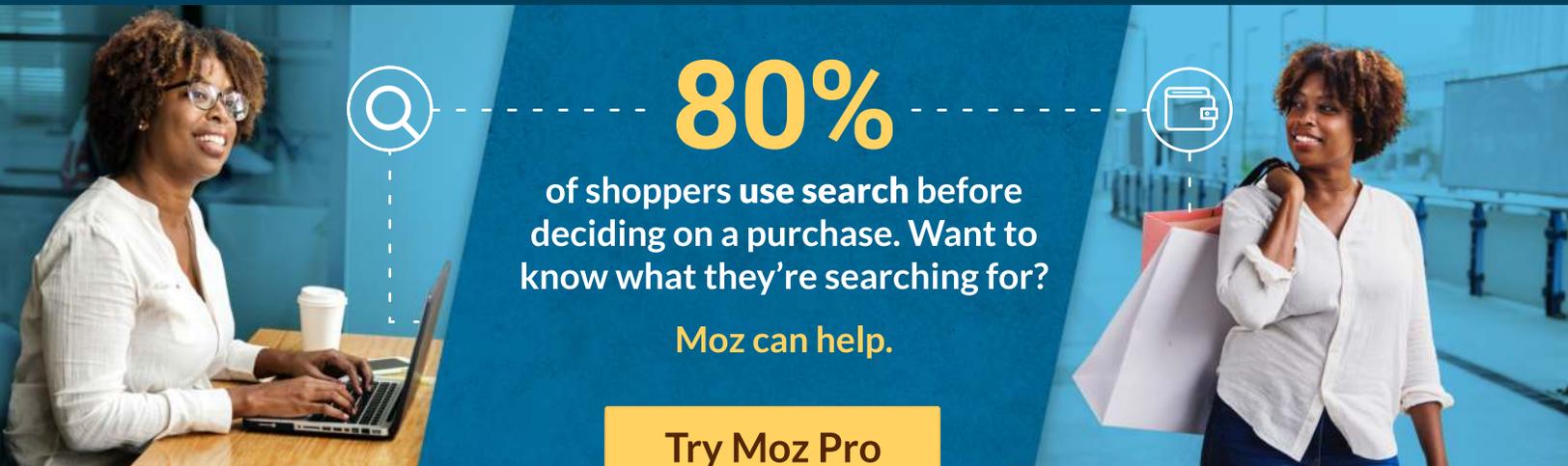
THE DEFINITIVE GUIDE



SEJ
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Make SEO Your Competitive Advantage



80%



of shoppers use search before deciding on a purchase. Want to know what they're searching for?

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Moz gives us the data we need to justify our projects and strategies. It helps us track the ROI of our efforts and brings significant transparency to our industry.



Jason Nurmi
Marketing Manager
Zillow

37,000+ customers trust Moz to give them the SEO insights they need to grow their business.



The logo consists of the letters 'SEJ' in a bold, white, sans-serif font above the word 'EBOOK' in a smaller, white, sans-serif font, all contained within a green square.

CONTENT

An isometric illustration of an online store. It features a computer monitor displaying a storefront with a red and white striped awning. A shopping cart is positioned in front of the monitor, containing several colorful blocks. A green button with the text 'BUY NOW' is attached to the cart. Above the cart, a clock shows '24h' on a yellow sign, indicating 24-hour service. A credit card is shown floating above the storefront. Below the monitor, there are two cardboard boxes, a magnifying glass, and a smartphone, suggesting search and discovery. Dotted lines connect these elements, representing the user journey.

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CONTENT

An isometric illustration of an online storefront. A computer monitor displays a storefront with a red and white striped awning. A shopping cart is positioned in front of the monitor, containing several colorful blocks. A green sign on the cart says 'BUY NOW'. Above the cart is a red clock with a yellow '24h' sign. A credit card is shown above the storefront, with a dashed line indicating a transaction path. Below the monitor, there are two cardboard boxes, a magnifying glass, and a smartphone, with another dashed line indicating a search or tracking path.

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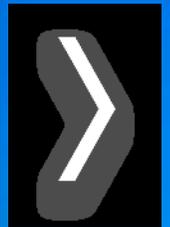
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15 Ecommerce Must-Haves

By:  Holly Gary



All websites are unique in their own way.



We've seen trends in ecommerce website design like animation, 360-degree product previews, advanced filtering, and dynamic product search.

However, trends don't guarantee conversion rates or robust user experiences. There are certain elements that every ecommerce site should have to stay relevant and competitive.

Here is a list of 15 must-have features that attract online shoppers.

1. User-Friendly

This comes from the old **K.I.S.S. adage** about keeping it simple. Simplicity should be a goal in good design and you don't have to sacrifice elegance to achieve it.

As a matter of fact, studies show that **76 percent** of consumers say the most important characteristic of a website is ease of use.

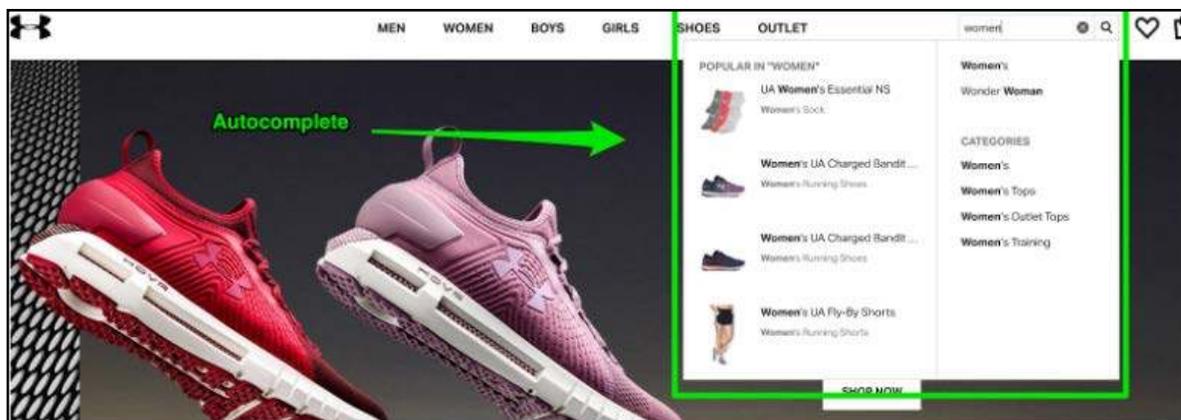
The objective is to help shoppers get to what they want, faster and without running into unnecessary complexity that can clog up the path to purchase.

Online sellers have minutes, if not seconds, to make a sale.

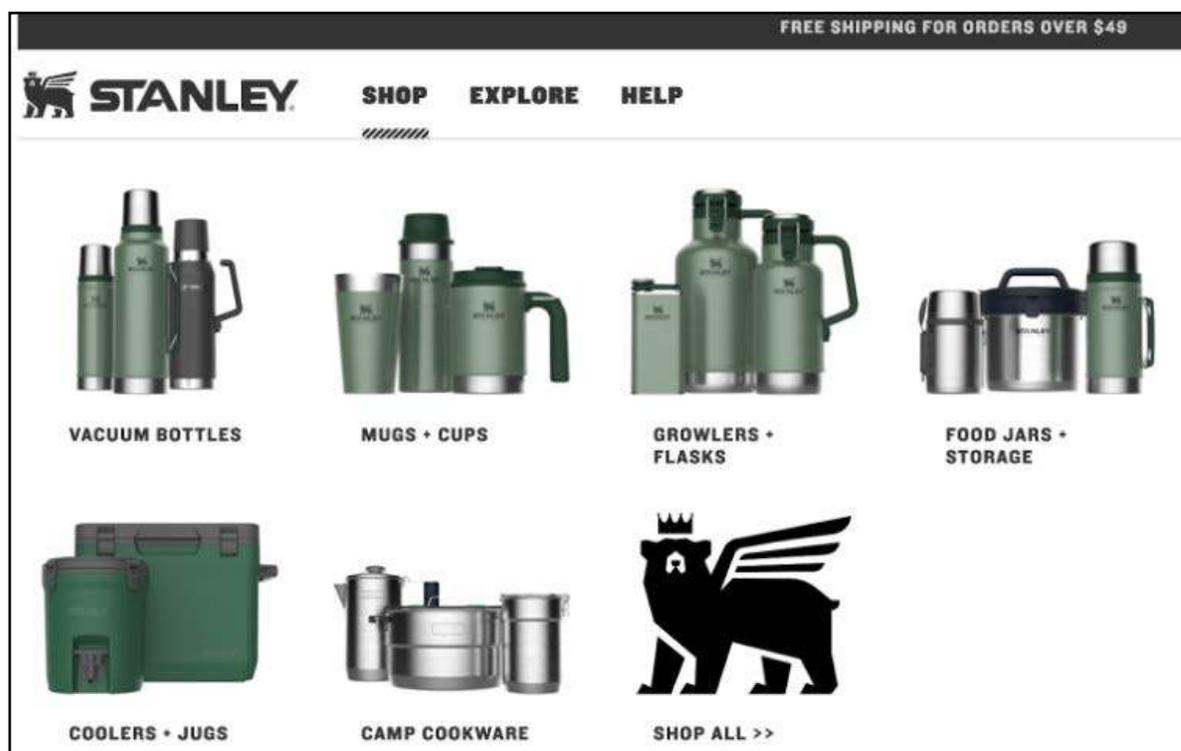
Focus on the user experience by providing shopping categories, filters, and comparison capabilities.

To make your ecommerce site more user-friendly, consider the following:

- Improve search functionality with an autocomplete option like Under Armour:



- Create effective, visual navigation like Stanley:



- Pre-populate forms like Target:

The screenshot shows a Target checkout page for a Dyson V6 Motorhead Cordfree Vacuum. The page is divided into several sections:

- Product Information:** Dyson V6 Motorhead Cordfree Vacuum - Iron/Fuchsia, Qty 1, Sale price \$199.99 (MSRP \$299.99).
- Protection Plan:** 2 year Target SquareTrade Electronics Protection Plan (\$175-199.99) see plan details, Qty 1, Price \$26.00.
- Shipping:** Email delivery, sent after your order ships.
- Order Summary:** Subtotal (2 items) \$225.99, Delivery Free, Estimated tax \$15.82, Total \$241.81.
- Shipping Address Form:** 2 of 4 | Shipping address. A checkbox for "My order includes a gift" is present. Below it, a form field is pre-populated with a name and address, indicated by a green arrow and the text "Pre-populate forms".
- Buttons:** "Save and continue" (red), "edit", "delete", "Add a new address", "Apply" (for promo code).

Ecommerce sites should be a competitive advantage instead of a troublesome experience.

2. Mobile-Friendly Website

Google declared it, so it must be done. All websites are required to have a **mobile-friendly version** by 2017 or suffer the SEO consequences.

In fact, mobile shopping accounts for **50 percent** of online transactions.

With a responsive website, content intuitively adapts to whatever device is accessing it to provide the most user-friendly experience.

Walmart increased mobile sales by **98 percent** after optimizing its mobile site.



And, Intelligentsia created a better purchase experience on mobile that led to a **16 percent** increase in mobile transactions.

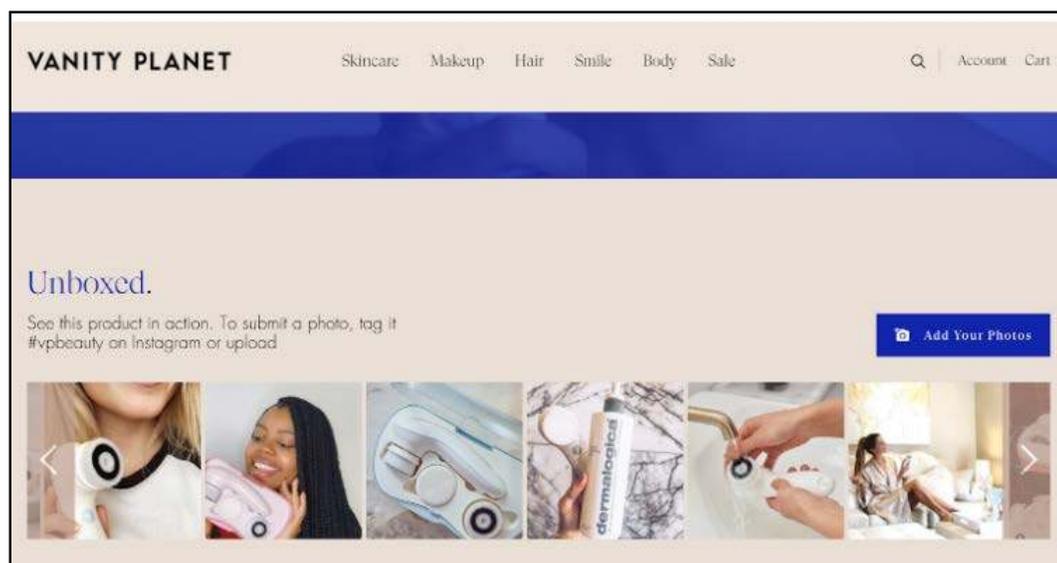
It doesn't matter if you have millions of product pages or five, creating a mobile-friendly experience for your shoppers will improve sales and potentially your rankings.

3. High-Resolution Photos & Video

Gone are the days of posting one photo with a few bullet points and a price tag. Shoppers want to see multiple angles and people using the product in different environments. They want to be able to zoom in and get a feel for the product.

Technical considerations for images are crucial. Images that don't load or take too long to load will see a consumer drop-off rate of **39 percent**, according to Adobe.

And, we're not talking about just professional photos. Vanity Planet found that adding Instagram photos to their product pages increased checkouts by **24 percent**.



Images sell, not text. Ecommerce websites should display multiple photos per product. The photos need to be high-resolution and optimized for page load.

4. User-Generated Reviews

Shoppers read reviews. About 95 percent of them, in fact. And, **57 percent** of consumers will only use a business if it has 4 or more stars.

You might think that having negative reviews is a sale killer. The opposite is actually true.

Having negative reviews can often be positive. It's shown that products without negative reviews are seen as censored and, in turn, shoppers will assume the positive reviews are fake.

Depending on website functionality, ecommerce sites can use plugins from the most popular review platforms including Yelp, Foursquare, and Facebook.

Forward-thinking ecommerce sites, like Paiwen paddleboards, are using reviews as user-generated content to drive social proof and build raving fans.

Can't wait to show it off.



Just got the board! Pretty incredible timing, that board got here awfully quick!

The board and everything with it is beautiful. It's a pretty incredible product that you guys have created. Can't wait to show it off. We will have a ton of fun on it and everyone else will want one. The Fedex truck driver is thinking of getting one for his wife so he will stop by in the coming weeks to get the info.

Thanks again for the great product and even better service!



Enjoying our Paiwen paddle board



I just thought I would send you guys a photo of myself and my 18 month old daughter, Lilo. Enjoying our Paiwen paddle board on the Sunshine Coast, BC.

Thanks so much.

I love My Paiwen board!



I love my Paiwen board!

Thanks

5. Special Offers

Most ecommerce sites are using special offers in their standard marketing practices via email, social, text, etc.

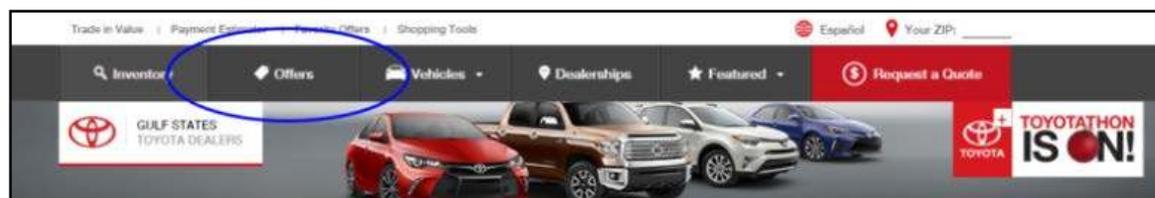
Next-level ecommerce sites take advantage of the prime real estate in the header section to promote special offers.



When shoppers realize they're getting a special deal, it motivates them to buy more and spend more time searching the site.

If ecommerce sites are using ongoing promotions, providing a unique webpage that lists the offers will not only drive more sales but also improve SEO.

Consider the shopper searching "zip code + toyota special offers" and the value of that organic search result.



6. Wish Lists

Oh, how I love wish lists. One for fashion, one for books to read, one for holiday gift ideas. Shop, save, and share!

Ecommerce sites that aren't using wish lists are leaving revenue on the virtual desktop table.

What's better than having customers bookmark items they want and will most likely buy in the future? That's just gold in the pocket. And a remarketing campaign dream.

Just take a note from Amazon.



Retailers are creating these individualized options to drive engagement. In this webinar by Brendan Witcher of Forrester, he shares how these can drive open rates as high as 80 percent, and 5x-10x higher return to purchase.

It's also an opportunity to share a brand with new buyers. When shoppers share their wish lists with family and friends, it sends FREE traffic with built-in social proof to a website.

7. Find-in-Store

Not all ecommerce sites have brick and mortar stores. However, those that do must have a find-in-store feature. Sometimes you don't want to wait for an item to ship. Instant gratification.

Shoppers are going online just to research and then complete the purchase in person. This is especially true for millennials, as they **tend to research online** before purchasing in a store.

This makes it incredibly helpful to see which local stores have products in stock.

8. Related Items

Simply seeing the phrase, “you might like this” causes a serotonin release signaling curiosity and excitement. A ‘Related Items’ feature on an ecommerce site creates the desirable stickiness effect that so many marketers strive to achieve.

It happens like this.

You saved the AeroPress coffee maker to your shopping cart.

A section emerges that says, “you might like this.”

Would you like some freshly roasted, fair trade whole coffee beans?

Maybe a digital scale to measure the exact amount of coffee grounds to achieve the perfect cup of coffee?

You get the picture.

When an online seller uses the related items feature to sell more, it’s actually signaling to the buyer that “they get me”.

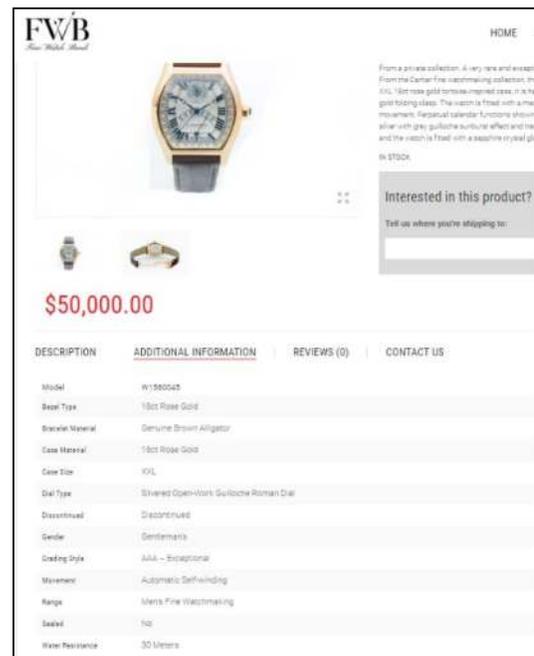
Related items can also include similar product categories to comparison shop, “people who bought this item also searched for”, and so on.

9. Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)

Complex purchases require confidence with a seller and detailed information when buying products online versus face-to-face.

At Forthea Interactive, our client, Fine Watch Bank, sells expertly crafted high-end watches.

The company's buyers need confirmation of watch authenticity and detailed product information to feel comfortable when making a purchase.



An additional information section details frequently asked information, which establishes credibility and builds confidence with the buyer.

FAQ sections also provide a self-help area to address common customer problems. Buyers often ask about product support, returns, lost account passwords, etc.

10. Social Proof

Brands and online sellers that connect with their buyers on an emotional level create brand trust and advocacy.

Social connection is undeniable and the opportunity to bond with an audience is easier now than ever.

Linking social profiles and user-generated content with an ecommerce site are must-have features that will give online sellers brand character.

Shoppers are inundated with a constant flow of “buy now” and “get this”. It’s those brands that engage with customers socially that create customers for life. They are offering products that help others and that people care about.

Social media allows ecommerce brands to show authenticity and associate an emotional connection with their products.

Look at [Nike's Pinterest](#) account to see how incorporating products with motivational images makes a huge impact.

See how Ikea uses user-generated content to share design ideas and inspiration for how to use its products.

Check out how Lowe’s produces how-to videos that teach people how to use its products.

9. Security Features

Online transactions are an integral part of our lives.

As such, ecommerce websites can be a lucrative target for cybercriminals. It's crucial that online sellers protect customer information and take steps to ensure privacy.

It all starts with a secure ecommerce platform.

With their sophisticated security features, it's no wonder that Magento and WordPress paired with WooCommerce are the top two platforms for online sellers.

Other must-have ecommerce security features to consider are:

- **SSL certificate:** establishes secure connectivity between a user and the website. Look for HTTPS and a green lock in the address bar before trusting an online store with your information. Select an SSL certificate vendor with name recognition. The enterprise ecommerce giants almost always use Symantec.

- **Two-factor authentication:** adds an extra layer of security by requiring username/password and a system-generated code sent via email or text.
- **Use a firewall:** provides a gateway or wall between two networks and permits authorized traffic and blocking malicious traffic.
- **Privacy policy link in footer:** addresses the website's privacy policies and promises customer data is not shared with third parties.

12 Advanced Payment Options

In the world of Apple Pay and PayPal, advanced payment options are a must-have feature for an ecommerce site.

Just consider the ease of use associated with Amazon one-click shopping. Shoppers with registered accounts can literally buy with the click of a button.

There are many popular online payment options. The key is understanding who the buyer is and implementing the most effective solutions. If a website is limiting payment options, make sure to explain why.

For example, an ecommerce site may not offer Bitcoin as a payment option after determining its value isn't reliable.

If buyers are technology-savvy individuals who tend toward this payment method, it's important to be transparent as to why it isn't an option. This transparency establishes that the brand understands its buyers and builds trust.

13. Detailed Shipping Information

Alarming, unexpected shipping costs are the number one reason for shopping cart abandonment. It's critical that ecommerce websites include shipping information early in the checkout process, including a zip code calculator showing cost.

It's also helpful to include delivery time and options for faster delivery. Sites should list countries that are outside normal shipping zones.

Interestingly, shoppers spend 30 percent more per order when free shipping is included. Be sure to present codes for free shipping on all pages of the site through the header navigation, if applicable.



14. Multi-Touchpoint Contact Page

When it comes to running an ecommerce site where most business takes place online, nothing builds trust more than an overly obvious and well-presented “contact us” feature. This is especially true when selling high-end merchandise or technical products.

Never make it hard for a buyer to get in touch or request support.

Consider the [contact page](#) a feature of the website. Include multiple ways to reach out, including phone, email, and an online form.

Some companies with brick and mortar stores offer online appointment setting via their contact page. Be sure to add customer service social links and Google maps for locations.

15. Return Policy

Return policies are an essential feature of any ecommerce website. The stats below really speak for themselves, but a return policy should be clearly visible and well-written or illustrated.

This is another trust-building feature of online selling. It reassures buyers that if they are unhappy or just need a different size, the brand is there for them.

These must-have ecommerce site features could be grouped into categories like Duh, DOH! and Ahhh. Marketers and web designers might say “duh” when it comes to incorporating ease of use, high-resolution photos, security features, and contact information. As they are best practices and trademarks of good design.

There are others who would say “DOH!” when considering elements like special offers, user-generated reviews, and social sharing. They know they should be using these features but just haven’t gotten around to implementing them. It’s never too late!

Finally, the “ahhh” moment when you get excited about planning for robust related items, shareable wish lists, and find-in-store features.

No matter what category you’re in, ecommerce sites have an incredible opportunity to use tried-and-true features blended with innovative new elements to create fantastic shopping experiences.



How to Effectively Perform Keyword Research for Ecommerce

By:  Maddy Osman



Keyword research is the foundation of every SEO strategy, especially when it comes to onsite SEO.

Done well, it provides direction for what type of content you should be optimizing for. On the other hand, a good keyword with a badly executed strategy won't help you make sales in your ecommerce store.

Keyword Research for SEO

When doing keyword research for ecommerce (or otherwise), there are two major ways to go about it:

- Starting from nothing with your own research.
- Spying on the competition.

Before getting started, it's important to understand the various factors that go into choosing good keywords.

Here are a few important considerations:

Search Volume

There are several [free keyword research tools](#), though this author swears by the paid tool, Ahrefs. Use your tool of choice to determine search volume.

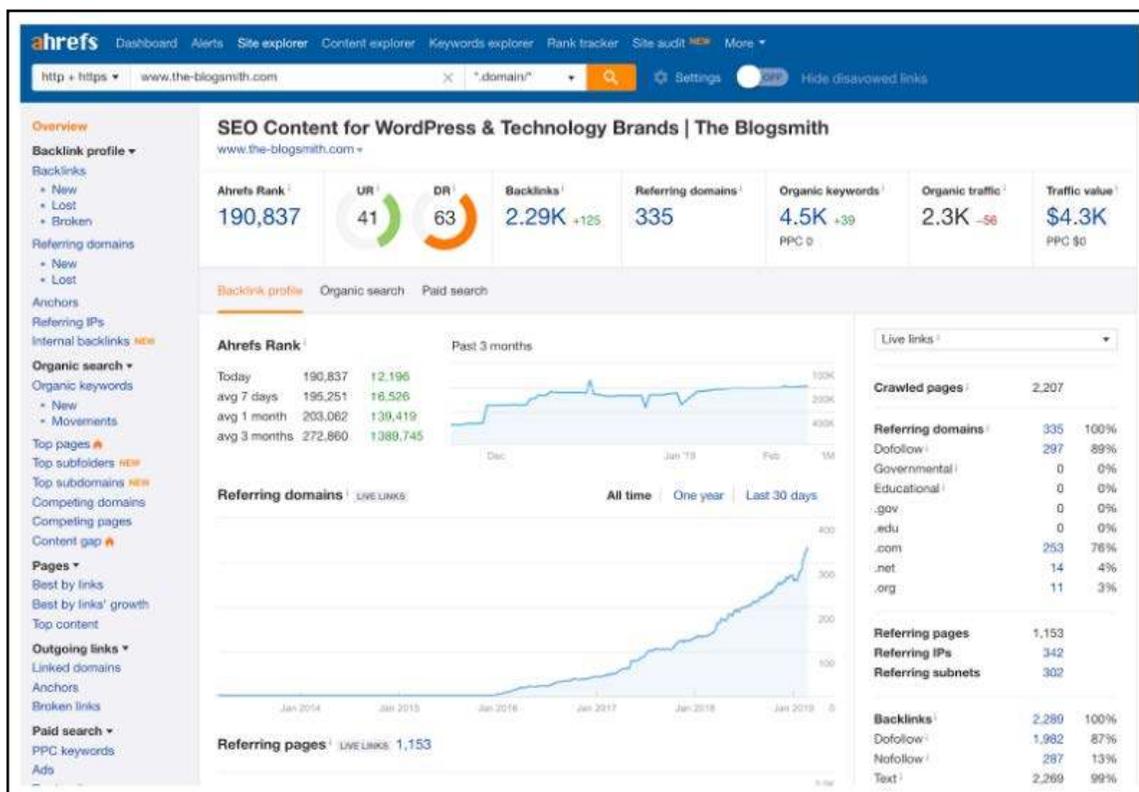
A high exact match search volume means there are a lot of users searching for a given term. That said, high search volume might also indicate high competition for ranking. You have to be realistic when comparing search volume to ranking difficulty in terms of your website's [domain authority](#).

A basic rule of thumb for choosing keywords is that anything over 20 monthly searches is worth at least considering.

Ranking Difficulty

A high ranking difficulty score means that it will be hard to compete with existing search results. Ultimately, it comes down to your website's domain authority in your specific niche.

Ahrefs provides a useful tool for determining where you stand when it comes to domain authority (they refer to it as “domain rating”), based on your existing backlinks.



In general, for a new website, you'll want to stay on the lower end of keyword difficulty. Like the now-defunct Klout score, it becomes exponentially harder to come up in relevant search for terms as their difficulty approaches 100. The same can be said for growing domain authority, which is also measured on a logarithmic scale.

Search Relevance

Even if you find a keyword with high search volume that you're confident you'll be able to rank for, you must consider its relevance to your website and what you're selling.

To put this into context, consider the value of 10 qualified prospects driven by search over 1,000 unqualified visitors who will never actually buy anything and who bounce immediately when your website fails to deliver on what they were hoping to find due to a relevance mismatch.

Which Ecommerce Pages to Optimize

For an ecommerce store, your home page and product pages are the highest priority for keyword optimization but certainly not the only pages worth these efforts. Don't miss the opportunity to optimize category pages, blog posts, and even image files/ALT tags for your target keywords.

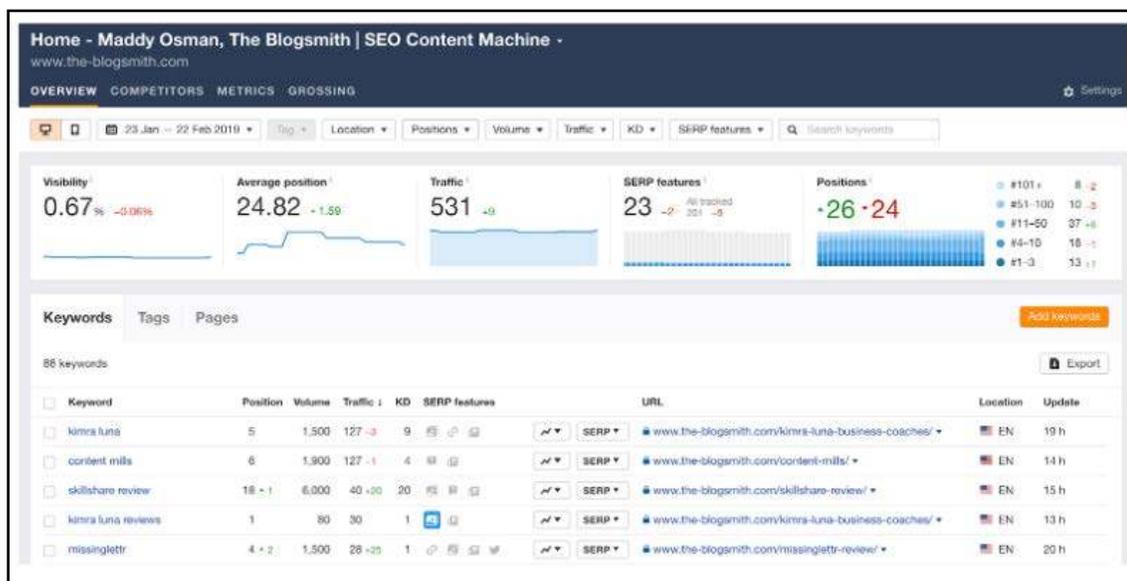
Determining Where You Rank in Relevant Search

Before you can make informed decisions with regards to your keyword strategy, you must first establish benchmarks. Doing this can be useful for guiding your efforts around creating new content versus updating old content.

Using Keyword Rank Tracking Tools to Benchmark Success

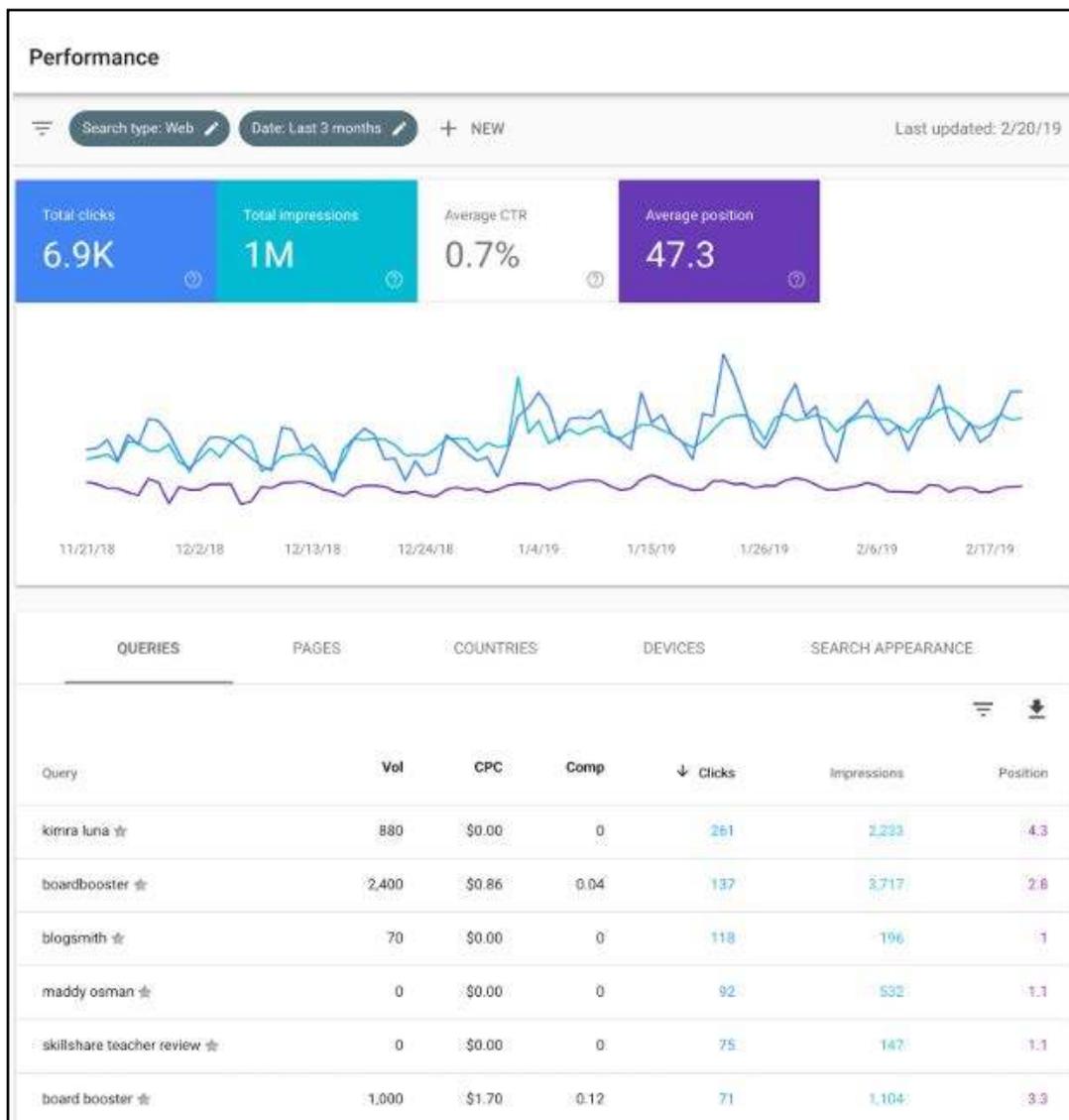
Already started to build your ecommerce website and have made attempts to incorporate keywords? Then make sure that you're incorporating some type of keyword ranking tracker to determine where you stand in relevant search.

Again, Ahrefs can accomplish this task for you alongside other already-mentioned functions with their Rank Tracker feature.



But you can also rely on free data readily available by connecting your website to Google Search Console.

The Performance report is where you'll want to look to determine which keywords you're ranking for and their average position in search. Make sure to manually add your keywords in addition to those suggested within the report.



Regularly checking on your rankings can provide a trigger for improving content that starts dropping in terms of average ranking positions. Dropping rankings act as an early warning that updates are needed to preserve your spot on search engine results pages (SERPs).

Spy on the Competition

After determining where your website is ranking, check to see how your competition is ranking. This will help you to determine how much work you'll have to do to come out on top and to get ideas to focus your own keyword research efforts.

This is especially important for ecommerce because not ranking first directly translates to losing out on conversions. If you're in second place on the SERPs and your competitor is first, you could stand to lose about half the potential traffic for that query.

A few things to look out for during your competitor research process:

- The specific keywords they're going after.
- The page authority required to rank where they're ranking.
- Their domain authority, a measure of the power of a domain (based heavily on high-authority/niche-related backlinks).
- Where their backlinks are coming from, which can give you ideas for guest posting and other collaboration opportunities.

The [**SEMrush keyword tool**](#) is one of the best out there for doing competitor research in terms of both SEO and PPC efforts. It can help you to determine all of the aforementioned pieces of the puzzle.

SEMrush Keyword Tool

The SEMrush keyword tool is useful for monitoring and research for your own ecommerce website, but SEOs also love it for its usefulness in spying on the competition.

All you have to do is input a URL and it will display metrics like organic search volume, organic traffic over time, paid search volume, number of backlinks, referring domains and IP addresses, and traffic by geographic channels.

You can see these stats in terms of both desktop and mobile search, as well as Google indexes in different countries. You can also perform regional searches for the specific areas you sell to.

SEMrush also gives you a list of related keywords and phrase match keywords – variations of the keywords that users input into the search bar, identifying websites that are most similar to yours based on seed organic keywords. This feature is especially useful if you're not exactly sure who your closest competition is.

What's more, SEMrush offers a tool that allows you to see common and unique keywords for up to five domains, as well as another tool that shows how difficult it is to rank against keywords your competitor is using.

As if giving you the ability to spy on the competition wasn't enough, SEMrush also has a Keyword Magic Tool, which gives you access to over 2 million keyword ideas.

It really is an all-in-one solution for competitor analysis, though it's worth noting that Ahrefs also offers many similar features if you want to stick with just one monthly SEO tool subscription.

Ideally, you'll experiment with both before deciding on the best one for your needs.

Use Long-Tail Keywords

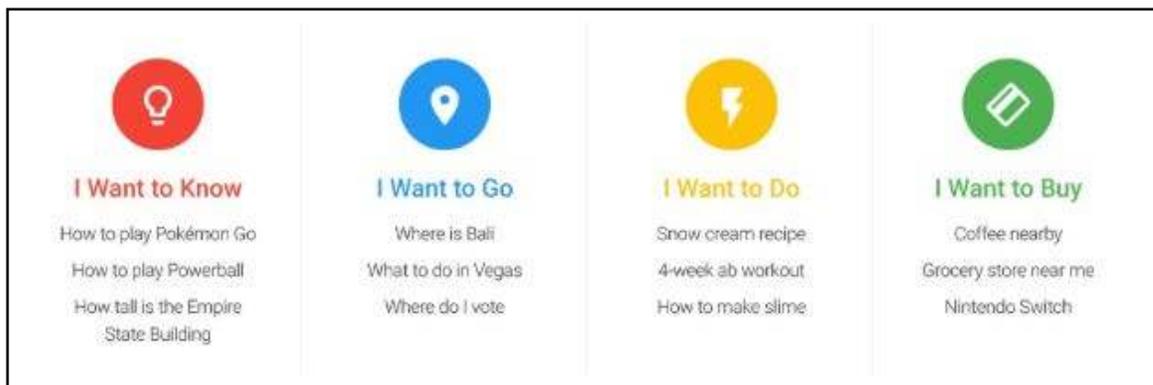
In a nutshell, using broad keywords isn't a good SEO strategy in modern times both because of too much competition and because of relevance issues.

So make sure to optimize primarily for long-tail keywords, especially when it comes to creating product pages and blog post content for your ecommerce website. It's true that fewer people will search for these queries, but they're also the ones who are surer of what they want and as a result, have higher purchasing intent.

High intent keywords are those that have high commercial intent, which signifies a strong likelihood for the searcher to take an action, whether to inquire, purchase, or simply gather information, which may later lead to a sale.

One way to identify keyword intent in terms of ecommerce is by looking at the cost per click (CPC) on your favorite keyword research tool (a metric that references paid search ads). More specific keywords tend to cost more but are an indicator of high search intent.

Many SEOs identify **three kinds of search intent** (navigational, informational, and transactional) but based on findings shared on **Think with Google**, there are really four:



For this ebook, we'll focus on the main three that most SEOs identify.

Since navigational intent is more or less about users typing in branded queries to find a specific page on a company website, we'll talk about the other two types of intent (and one that bridges the gap between these two):

Informational Intent

Keywords with informational intent signal that a user is looking for information and has questions that need answering.

According to [Google's Search Quality Rater guidelines](#), these keywords would fall under the "I want to know" searches, and in the sales funnel, they would place searchers at the top of the funnel.

According to [Practical Ecommerce](#), optimizing for these types of keywords probably won't lead to a sale right away, but they still represent ways to engage with potential clients early in their buying process.

Informational intent keywords usually answer questions (how, how to, what to, where to, etc.), and are most ideal for creating content that provides tips and answers questions.

Optimizing for informational intent has the added benefit of giving your content a shot at the featured snippet (position zero) for your target keywords, giving you the opportunity to jump ahead of other content currently ranking in the top ten, even if you're not otherwise competitive with currently ranking domains sharing this type of content.

Choosing keywords that optimize for informational intent is best for positioning yourself as an authority, which is especially important when you're selling informational products like online courses and ebooks.

Investigational Intent

An investigational search can be described as something between an informational and transactional search.

It's not directly transactional (there's a chance that users searching for these queries may not be ready to make a purchase) but they represent users further along in the sales funnel compared to informational searches.

When people engage in an investigational search, they may be trying to compare prices and various product features, or furthering their understanding of something (by doing research).

Investigational intent isn't normally included with the top three types of search intent, but it makes sense to expand on this hybrid type of intent when considering ecommerce purposes.

Some keyword signals for this type of intent include: compare, for men, for women, alternative, review, and best.

In general, optimize for these keywords to make content convincing your potential customers that you are better than the competition.

Transactional Intent

Transactional searches are those performed when the customer is ready to buy something. These are usually referred to as high commercial intent keywords.

Some keywords that indicate transactional intent include: sale, coupon, price, buy, for sale, free shipping, where to buy, discount, and review.

Product keywords (“winter clothing”, “coffee maker”), specific products (iPhone XS, Samsung S9), and branded searches can also be keyword signals for transactional searches.

Use these keywords to create optimized product pages and local SEO content.

Besides looking for long-tail keywords, also aim to target opportunity keywords, which are keywords that rank in the 11-20 spots, and have a good search volume/low difficulty score.

Bring it all together by creating an **editorial calendar** that reflects a strategy optimizing for each type of intent. Don't just focus on optimizing for transactional intent – you'll build up a more complete sales funnel that reaches people at various stages of the buyer's journey by creating content to appeal to each type of intent.

Wrapping Up: How to Effectively Perform Keyword Research for Ecommerce

Keyword research is an important foundational step for developing an ecommerce SEO strategy. Done well, it provides useful direction regarding what tactics and strategies to employ. Try approaching keyword research from two different vantage points: starting from nothing with your own research, then spying on competitors.

Just make sure that you're focusing on the right metrics – search volume alone is not enough to determine the keywords that will eventually lead to ecommerce conversions.



Site Navigation: The Foundation for Navigating Your Website to Success

By:  Stoney deGeyter



One of the biggest breakdowns I see most often in website architecture is sites with poor navigation.

On a pure usability level, navigation has one job: help visitors find the information they need. But in reality, there is a lot more going on under the hood that makes a site navigation succeed (or fail).

Navigation plays a role in usability, findability, search indexing, internal link optimization, and content optimization.

All told, navigation provides a framework for a site's structure and contributes to both user- and search-friendliness.

Get your navigation wrong, and you'll find an otherwise stellar-looking website performing poorly on a number of key success metrics.

Get it right, and you have the foundation for building a high-performance website on all levels.

Building an Efficient Navigational Structure

When it comes to navigation, what is “efficient” for one site may not be efficient for another. Each site is unique and will have unique navigational characteristics.

Here are some things to consider:

- Where should your navigation be on the page?
- What information needs to be presented in the global navigation?
- How many categories / sub-categories should you include?
- Should you use drop down (or fly out) menus?
- If space is limited, what navigation items do you include or exclude?

How these questions get answered often starts with understanding the two types of navigation links. Links that are:

- Customer-focused
- Company-focused

Customer-Focused Navigation

If you care at all about sales and conversions, you need to prioritize your navigation on what your customers want.

Unfortunately, most sites focus on the company navigation items and the customers get the short straw. This is exactly opposite of what your navigation should be.

One of the first questions I ask when performing a website audit is if the visitor saw nothing more than the navigation portion of the website, would they know if the site will satisfy their need? If your products or services are hidden under a single link item labeled “shop” or “services”, then the answer is likely “no.”

Take a look at the two navigations below. Which one tells you immediately what the company offers?

Example 1:



Example 2:



Both companies are manufacturers, but only one makes that clear through their navigation. And the visitor doesn't have to search, read content, or click to know it!

You can make the argument that the visitor should already know if they typed in your URL or clicked the link from Google, but why assume?

Why keep your visitors guessing when you can provide the information (and the links) for what they want without forcing them to hunt for it?

But what about Contact Us and About Us Links? Those are important too, right?

Yes, absolutely. But not *as* important.

Visitors are only interested in looking at those (or other company-focused pages) once they get further into the buying process. Those pages assist with the sale, but you have to show them that you have what they want first.

Company-Focused Navigation

The second navigational focus is to provide links that point visitors to information about your company.

As I said above, these navigational elements are important but are secondary to the customer navigation items.

As such, they should be segmented visually as well. This can be done by making these less prominent (or hidden behind a hamburger menu), but still easily accessible.

You can see in the KTC example above that they have their company focused navigation above the customer. Now, that's still too loud for my liking, but the segmentation still works.

Here is another site that puts the customer nav first but offers the company nav in a less obtrusive way:



All the important items are there and easily findable, but secondary to the products that visitors want. This allows visitors to easily find and click those pages when they want them, but they are out of the way until the visitor is ready for them.

While your company-focused links might vary, here are some pretty much universal navigation links that should be visible:

- **Logo link** – You can add a separate “home” link if you like but always be sure the logo links to the home page.
- **About Us** – This can be an important page for those deciding who they want to do business with.

- **Contact Link** – Don't make visitors hunt for a way to get in touch with you.
- **Phone Number** – While phone calls are often not preferred by the business, sometimes they are preferred by the customer. Without it, you risk losing them.
- **Search Bar** – Provide a way to search for your products or information.
- **Checkout/Cart** – Much like a contact link, you want visitors to be able to get to their cart and check out easily.

There are some exceptions to these options above and those typically fall into the lines of the size of your business. Certain well-known brands don't necessarily need About Us links and don't necessarily want (or need) people to be able to contact them easily.

When you pretty much have more business than you know what to do with, you can afford to move those links to your footer, or even remove them altogether.

But when you're looking for every new customer you can get, consider carefully before you do.

Ecommerce Navigation Issues

The challenges for ecommerce websites magnify the importance of establishing a clear and proper navigation for your website.

Your navigation is not only for the purposes of helping your visitors get the content they need, but ensuring the search engines can better find and index pages so they can be found in search.

While the top level navigation is important in ecommerce sites, other navigational options can be equally, if not more important overall.

Related Focus

One of the best opportunities to get additional products in front of your audience is by adding links to products related to the one a customer is viewing.

These can be in the form of:

- “Similar” products
- Add-ons or accessories
- Popular items
- Recently viewed products.

Any (or all) of these options offer a way for you to increase the average visitor order, while also throwing additional link equity toward other pages.

Amazon does a great job of offering additional products. In my search for 12 Monkeys (the single greatest sci-fi show in existence!), Amazon offers additional products that customers viewed and bought:



Add to Cart Functions, Not Links

This is less of a problem today than it was just a few years ago, but there are still some solutions and systems that are using natural links to add products to carts or to checkout.

This creates all sorts of problems with search engines following links and, essentially, adding products to a cart.

This type of functionality shouldn't be limited to just cart links. The same applies to links for writing product reviews, adding a product to a wishlist, printable links, product comparisons, add

comments or reviews, or any other link that serves as a function rather than leading the visitor to another page of content you would want showing up in search results.

In the image below from Best Buy, none of the three buttons/links indicated are able to be “clicked” by a search engine spider.

Avengers: Infinity War [Includes Digital Copy] [Blu-ray] [2018]

SKU: 6234447 Release Date: 09/14/2018 Rating: PG-13

★★★★★ 4.9 (12,679 Customers)

Includes digital copy

BLU-RAY + DIGITAL CODE
MULTI-SCREEN EDITION

AVENGERS INFINITY WAR

PRICE MATCH GUARANTEE

\$24.99

\$3.99 Shipping: Get it by Wed, Feb 13

Want it faster? Pick it up at North Canton or see more shipping options in checkout to 44701.

Act Quick - Only 1 left at your store!

[Add to Cart](#)

[Save for Later](#)

Compare

Upgrade for \$5

See what you get with an upgraded model.

[Compare Models](#)

Special Offers

\$15.99 for Headphones with Purchase

Cardmember Offers

Get 5% Back in Rewards

Filters Versus Pages

One of the challenges with ecommerce sites is determining when to have links to pages and when a filter will suffice.

Let's say you have an apartment finder website and you want visitors to be able to navigate their way to results that fit their living criteria. Someone may want a furnished, three-bedroom, pet-friendly apartment with a pool, washer and dryer, gym, has utilities included, and comes with a covered parking space.

Some of those options will work just fine as filters. Heck, maybe all of them can be filters.

But when it comes to good SEO, you also know that some of those can make for great optimized landing pages.

So which is which?

I think it all comes down to keyword research. If a significant number of people are searching for 3 bedroom apartments in Denver, then it probably warrants a page with content and a listing of those apartments.

My gut tells me not as many are searching for a pool, utilities or even a washer or dryer. If that's the case, go with filters.

But if there is any level of search volume that you want to capture, go with landing pages and use "filters" on the site to drive people to the pages with the content they need.

Other Navigational Needs

Breadcrumbs

Breadcrumbs are the average website's equivalent of Google's "I'm Feeling Lucky" button.



It's used by about 1 percent of searchers, but a vast majority don't want it to go away.

Aside from being a great navigational tool that can help both visitors and search engines easily navigate a website, they are most commonly used as a visual aid.

Breadcrumbs provide the at-a-glance indication that lets your visitors see where they are on your site. And if necessary, they can quickly navigate a couple of steps back.

Despite their lack of actual use, breadcrumbs are a powerful SEO tool. When your breadcrumbs align textually with your main

navigation and URLs, Google (and those other search engines) will use that as an enhanced signal for understanding the topic of a page and what it should rank for.

Plus, when Google displays the URL in search results, they are more likely to show the more reader-friendly version:

Motorized Scooters - The Best Motor Scooters Online from ...
<https://www.urbanscooters.com> › Products › Scooters ▼
For the best prices on **motor scooters**, shop with UrbanScooters.com. We sell top brands of the best motorized scooters including X-Treme, E-Wheel, Tank Sports ...

Rather than a less-than-readable URL:

Mobility Scooters | Motorized Scooter | SpinLife - SpinLife.com
<https://www.spinlife.com/category.cfm?categoryID=4> ▼
Looking for the best mobility scooters? Read thousands of mobility scooter reviews or call our experts to help you find the right **motorized scooter** for your needs.

Finally, breadcrumbs help search engines better understand your site hierarchy.

It's always best when this is just a reinforcement of how you already have your navigation laid out, but on the chance that the navigation can't be hierarchically accurate, the breadcrumbs can fill in the blanks.

Keywords in Link Text

Navigation is one of the easiest places to get your keywords into links.

After all, if you're presenting a link to your Coat Racks page, you're not going to put "That thing you hang your coats on" in your navigation. But your navigation isn't the only way to help visitors navigate your site.

Content-based links provide a great opportunity to easily allow visitors to move from one page to the next based on what they are reading and what interests them.

When adding these content-based links, the need to use keywords still applies. Instead of, "Click here to learn more about preparing personal tax returns," a better way to link would be, "Learn more about preparing personal tax returns."

If you really want to keep the call to action as part of the link (and there is no reason not to if you can make it work), you would write this: Click here to learn more about preparing personal tax returns.

Not only does this create a clickable call to action using keywords, but this helps prevent over-optimization of your link text by always linking with only your keywords. Search engines are pretty good about sniffing that out.

Related Topics

Similar to linking to related products with your ecommerce site, almost any site can benefit by linking to related topics on their blog.

At the end of your post, provide a few related links that visitors might want to click through to.

Now read this:

- [Go Blog Yourself: Writing Your Blog Posts with Pen in Hand and SEO In Mind](#)
- [Write for The Three Types of Readers](#)
- [Why We Write, and How You Learn](#)
- [Go Blog Yourself Step 8: Do It Right and Do It Again](#)
- [Go Blog Yourself Step 2: Know What They Want To See](#)

HTML Links

Unless you're deliberately trying to block content from search engines, you want to make sure your links are crawlable.

Search engines have gotten pretty good about following all kinds of non-HTML links, but they are not perfect.

So yeah, you can get away with using those kinds of links, but it's never ideal and opens up the possibility that Google either won't follow it or won't weight the link properly.

Another common way to link that isn't so great is to use selection forms or force the visitor to enter a password to view the content.

For the most part, any content hidden behind these walls will have a harder time getting indexed. Which may be the intent, but just make sure it is.



There is no way to overemphasize the importance of your website's navigation to your overall optimization efforts. If your navigation is broke, your SEO is broke.

Of course, fixing your navigation won't fix all of your optimization issues, but for most sites, this is the best place to start moving toward a search engine friendly website that, at the very least, has the potential to perform in search.



How to Do Technical SEO for Ecommerce Websites

By:  Manish Dudharejia



Ecommerce is one of the fastest-growing sectors and is often perceived to be dominated by the likes of Amazon and Walmart.

Ecommerce is one of the fastest-growing sectors and is often perceived to be dominated by the likes of Amazon and Walmart.

However, with appropriate marketing strategies, small ecommerce websites can also get their fair share of customers.

That's where technical SEO comes in. It is crucial for improving your online store's searchability.

Here are 20 technical SEO tips that will help increase your web traffic and generate more sales.

1. Site Structure

The site structure should make the content easily accessible to visitors. Keep important pages no more than three clicks away from the home page.

The ideal site structure should be:

Homepage > Categories > Subcategories > Products

You can avoid adding subcategories in smaller sites. Make sure each product belongs to only one category or subcategory.

Similarly, your URL structure should also be clear and consistent.

- **Good URL:** `www.example.com/brand/category/product_name`
- **Bad URL:** `www.example.com/brand/nsalkjdhsfha`

For example, if you are selling a Samsung Galaxy M30 smartphone, the URL should be:

`www.example.com/samsung/smartphone/Galaxy-M30`
or

`www.example.com/Smartphone/SamsungGalaxy-M30`

However, try to keep the URL length under 160 characters.

2. URL Structure

The structure of ecommerce URLs can get pretty messy. There are all sorts of tags and weird-looking codes that come into play.

Here is an example of an ecommerce URL that could use some work:

```
https://www.spreadshirt.com/shop/design/galatic+lion+poster-D5ade3743aa0c6d29b7422154?sellable=6
```

Ideally, you want the URL structure to be extremely easy to read and give the user a crystal clear idea of what the page is all about.

Now, this is certainly easier said than done. I would recommend following these formulas:

- **Category pages:** yourwebsite.com/category-name (category page)
- **Subcategory pages:** yourwebsite.com/category-name/subcategory-name
- **Sub-subcategory pages:** yourwebsite.com/category-name/subcategory-name/subcategory-name
- **Product pages:** yourwebsite.com/category-name/subcategory-name/subcategory-name/product

Say you sell groceries online.

Here is what your ecommerce URLs might look like:

- **Category page:** yourwebsite.com/snacks
- **Subcategory page:** yourwebsite.com/snacks/cookies
- **Sub-subcategory page:** yourwebsite.com/snacks/cookies/oreos
- **Product page:** yourwebsite.com/snacks/cookies/oreos/double-stuff

As general guidelines for ecommerce URL structures:

- Keep it as short as possible
- Use your focus keyword
- Clarify the hierarchy
- ALWAYS use hyphens to separate words (not underscores)

3. Sitemap (XML/HTML)

There are two types of sitemaps: XML and HTML.

In the way of ecommerce SEO, each has their own roles, strengths, and weaknesses.

HTML sitemaps are generally created to help shoppers navigate the platform. XML sitemaps, on the other hand, are there to ensure that the search engine robots can properly index the URLs throughout the website.

XML sitemaps are generally more straightforward and used to make the site's information more readable for machines.

These sitemaps are a list marked up with XML so the search engines can quickly decipher what a page is all about. [Here is how most XML sitemaps look like:](#)

```
<?xml version="1.0" encoding="UTF-8" ?>
<urlset xmlns="http://www.sitemaps.org/schemas/sitemap/0.9">
  <url>
    <loc>http://www.menards.com/main/home-plans/linwood-building-plans-only/p-1444423338905-c-5795.htm</loc>
    <priority>0.5</priority>
    <lastmod>2015-12-03</lastmod>
  </url>
  <url>
    <loc>http://www.menards.com/main/home-plans/scottsdale-building-plans-only/p-1444423338906-c-5797.htm</loc>
    <priority>0.5</priority>
    <lastmod>2015-12-03</lastmod>
  </url>
  <url>
    <loc>http://www.menards.com/main/home-plans/freeman-building-plans-only/p-1444423338907-c-5795.htm</loc>
    <priority>0.5</priority>
    <lastmod>2015-12-03</lastmod>
  </url>
  <url>
    <loc>http://www.menards.com/main/heating-cooling/fireplaces-stoves/fireplace-mantels-shelves/hudson-american</loc>
    <priority>0.5</priority>
    <lastmod>2015-12-03</lastmod>
  </url>
</urlset>
```

For SEO, XML sitemaps serve as an invitation to crawl a URL.

Now, having an XML sitemap is NOT a guarantee that a page will be indexed – it's more of a recommendation of the pages you want the search engine bots to crawl.

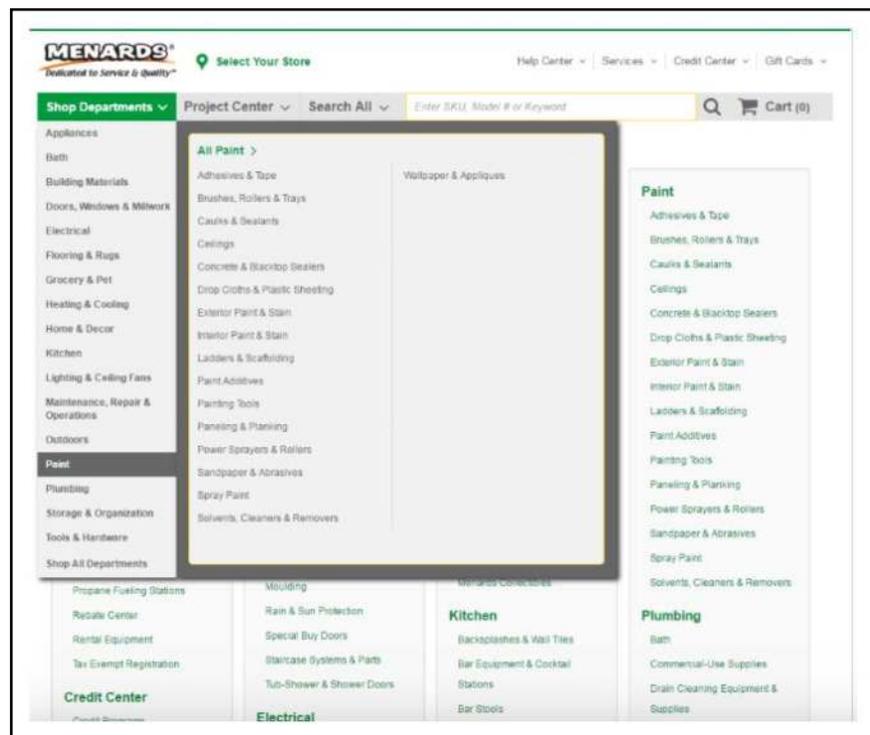
Additionally, XML sitemaps do not showcase the authority of a page. In contrast to HTML sitemaps, the URLs listed do not pass on link equity and are not a catalyst to improve search rankings.

These sitemaps are typically produced by developers. In an ideal situation, they are generated automatically on a weekly basis to (hopefully) improve the index-ability of your pages.

HTML sitemaps are much easier to understand at first glance. These are meant to enable more options for users to navigate the platform and dive deeper into the site.

As a result, the pages are put in a better position to see SEO benefits.

[Here is how an HTML sitemap looks like:](#)



HTML sitemaps can be valuable for several key reasons:

- If the current navigation on your website is limited in the pages to which it can link.
- If the current navigation or an aspect of the website is inaccessible to search engines.
- The pages linked to the HTML sitemap are important and need a link that is more visible higher up on the website – support pages, FAQs, etc.

Essentially, HTML sitemaps are another form of internal linking. While the benefits won't be huge, having one on your ecommerce site will help a bit.

4. Log File Analysis

The process of log file analysis involves downloading files from your server and importing it to a log filing tool.

This ideally provides you with information about every interaction with your website – bot or human.

From here, it can be analyzed to better inform SEO-related decisions as well as pinpoint unknown issues.

Perhaps the biggest SEO benefit of log file analysis is to show you how your website's crawl budget is being used.

Typically, the higher the authority of the domain, the higher the crawl budget will be.

Even though it can't directly impact the crawl budget your site gets from the search engines, log file analysis can do a lot to optimize the way this budget is utilized.

This is done in several ways, including:

- Identify the URLs that are crawled most frequently, and optimize accordingly.
- Find client errors and remedy.
- Pinpoint orphaned pages that are not visible during site crawls.
- Highlight slow-loading pages to be sped up.

5. Crawl Budget

The number of pages on your site which Google search bots will crawl on any given day is your crawl budget.

Low crawl budget can lead to indexing issues affecting your search rankings. Owing to their large size, most ecommerce websites have to **optimize their crawl budget.**

You can use the **Google Search Console** to check your crawl budget.

To improve your crawl budget:

- Optimize your overall link structure.
- Increase the number of backlinks.
- Remove duplicate content.
- Fix broken links.
- Update your sitemap regularly.

6. Crawl the Website

You can use tools such as Screaming Frog, SEMrush, Ahrefs, and DeepCrawl to identify and fix a variety of HTTP error issues including:

- 3XX redirection errors.
- 4XX Client errors.
- 5XX server errors.

You can also identify duplicate or missing page titles, image alt text, H1 tags, or meta descriptions using this crawl.

7. Canonical Tags

Sometimes, large ecommerce sites have product pages reachable from multiple categories. Such situations often lead to different URLs with the same content.

To avoid this, use a **[canonical tag](#)**. This simple HTML element will tell the search engine which version of the URL should be crawled and shown in the search results.

You should proactively use the canonical tag on the homepage as homepage duplicates are quite common in ecommerce sites.

8. Robots.txt

Robots.txt are files that indicate that a page or section of a website should not be crawled by search engine bots.

Using Robots.txt serves a number of purposes:

- Blocks pages that are non-public – like login pages, forms, or ones that contain sensitive information.
- Maximizes your crawl budget – block unimportant pages.
- Prevents resource pages from getting indexed – PDFs, images, etc.

These days, most websites do not use Robots.txt – as Google has gotten pretty good at finding and indexing the most important pages on websites.

However, on ecommerce websites, there are a few types of pages in which it's wise to use Robots.txt files.

These URLs would likely involve the following:

- /cart.php
- /checkout.php
- /finishorder.php
- /*login.php

9. Redirect Out-of-Stock Product Pages

Most online stores have a few pages with out-of-stock products.

Although taking such pages down is the usual norm, doing so can lead to a **404 error**, which in turn, can negatively affect your search results. Besides, most visitors find the 404 error annoying.

Instead, you can redirect the URL to the next most relevant page.

If the product is gone for good, use the **301** (permanent) redirect. If not, you can use the 302 redirect, allowing Google to continue indexing the URL.

10. Duplicate / Thin Content Issues

Duplicate content and issues with thin content can spell serious trouble for the SEO of ecommerce websites.

A common reality is that the search engines are constantly refining themselves to reward websites that offer unique content of the highest quality.

It's surprisingly easy for duplicate content to exist on ecommerce websites.

This can often be caused by technical issues with the CMS and code-related factors. These issues commonly involve pages related to session IDs, shopping cart pages, internal search results, and product review pages.

Thin content, on the other hand, refers to pages with very little or no content. These commonly include empty product descriptions, test/orphaned pages, and thin category pages.

Because thin content is not good for the user experience, it can be a huge culprit that can bog down the quality of your website (in the eyes of the search engines).

In turn, this can seriously inhibit a website's ability to rank highly on relevant searches.

For both thin and duplicate content, this is where you need to use canonical URLs to help the search engines understand that there is only one version of a page that should be indexed.

11. Fix 3xx, 4xx, 5xx Errors

HTTP status codes are a server's response to a browser's request. When someone visits your website, their browser sends a request to your server, which then responds with a three-digit code.

Of the five most common status codes, the first two aren't typically big issues.

- 1xx – The server is processing the request.
- 2xx – The request was completed successfully.

The next three can be problematic.

- **3xx** – The request was received, but the user got redirected elsewhere. Includes 300, 301, 302, 303, 304, 305, 306, 307, and 308 errors.
- **4xx** – Client error. Page not found. This means a request was made, but there was an issue on the website side. This one commonly appears when a page doesn't exist within a website. Includes 400, 401, 403, and 404 errors.
- **5xx** – This means the request was made, but the server failed to respond or complete the request. Includes 500, 501, 502, 503, 504, 505, 506, 507, 508, 509, and 510 errors.

These HTTP status codes are very important to assess the SEO and health of your website.

Google bots treat these codes differently in terms of how they crawl and index the pages on your website.

While most codes don't necessitate an emergency, 3xx, 4xx, and 5xx are ones that need your attention.

12. Rendering

Rendering of a website involves URLs being processed for JavaScript. This happens after the URL is crawled.

There are generally two types of rendering that take place on websites:

- Client-Side Rendering (CSR).
- Server-Side Rendering (SSR).

Client-side rendering relies on JavaScript executed by the browser via the JS framework. The client will request the source code, then make a second request for the .js file – of which contains all the HTML in JavaScript.

While in server-side rendering, the processing of all of a page's resources that are housed on the server. A page gets requested, then the HTML is delivered to the browser, rendered, downloaded for JS and CSS, then appears to the bot or user.

If pages aren't properly rendered, this means they won't be indexed adequately. In turn, they won't be ranked appropriately on the search engine results pages.

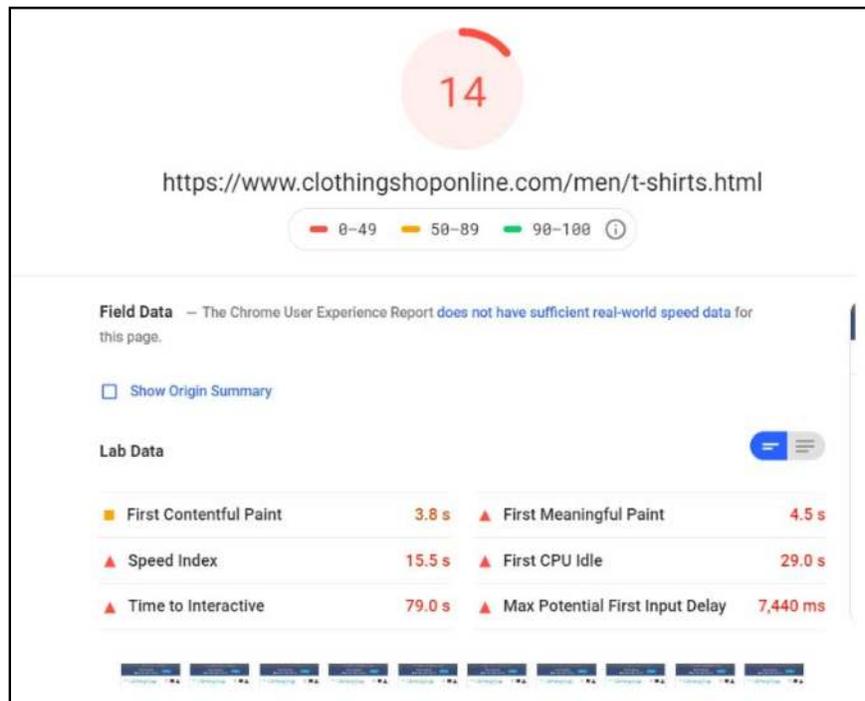
13. Page Speed

Page speed has been a ranking signal for a long time.

Also commonly referred to as “page load time,” page speed refers to the time it takes to display the content on the browser from the time the server receives the initial request.

The faster the page speed, the better it will ideally rank on searches.

You are wise to routinely test the pages of your ecommerce website with Google’s **PageSpeed Insights** tool.



This will show you the load times, as well as what is bogging them down. From here, you can adjust your pages accordingly.

14. Structured Data

Structured data can be used to enhance the products of an ecommerce website in the search results in rich snippets. In turn, give it a better chance of ranking highly.

This data provides the search engines with extra details which can work to improve visibility, click-through rates, and outrank competitors.

Common forms of structured data to include are:

- Product name
- Aggregate rating
- Price
- Availability

Adding these schemas to your product page will ideally display the mark-up to the search engines and improve its chances of ranking for a related query.

To use structured data, you need to embed the content pertaining to the product between the `itemscope itemtype =http://schema.org/product>` and the tags. From here, put the product name within the area and in the tags.

For the product ratings, you need to add a section to the code to contain this variable. This markup should look like: `itemtype=http://schema.org/AggregateRating">`tags.

Lastly, you need to build a section that indicates the price and availability inside the `itemscope itemtype=http://schema.org/Product`.

Here is an [example](#) of what the schema should look like:

```
<div itemscope itemtype="http://schema.org/Product">
  <span itemprop="name">Kenmore White 17" Microwave</span>
  
  <div itemprop="aggregateRating"
    itemscope itemtype="http://schema.org/AggregateRating">
    Rated <span itemprop="ratingValue">3.5</span>/5
    based on <span itemprop="reviewCount">11</span> customer reviews
  </div>
  <div itemprop="offers" itemscope itemtype="http://schema.org/Offer">
    <!--price is 1000, a number, with locale-specific thousands separator
    and decimal mark, and the $ character is marked up with the
    machine-readable code "USD" -->
    <span itemprop="priceCurrency" content="USD">$</span><span
      itemprop="price" content="1000.00">1,000.00</span>
    <link itemprop="availability" href="http://schema.org/InStock" />In stock
  </div>
  ...
</div>
```

15. HTTPS/SSL

HTTPS and SSL pertain to the security of your website.

An HTTPS/SSL tag indicates that a website is secure and the connection is encrypted.

If you see a green padlock in front of the URL in the search bar, this means the website has an SSL certificate.



About five years ago, Google rolled out algorithm updates that favored HTTPS websites.

While this was subsequently claimed to be a lightweight ranking signal, it's important to note that **50%** of Google's page one organic search results feature an HTTPS website.

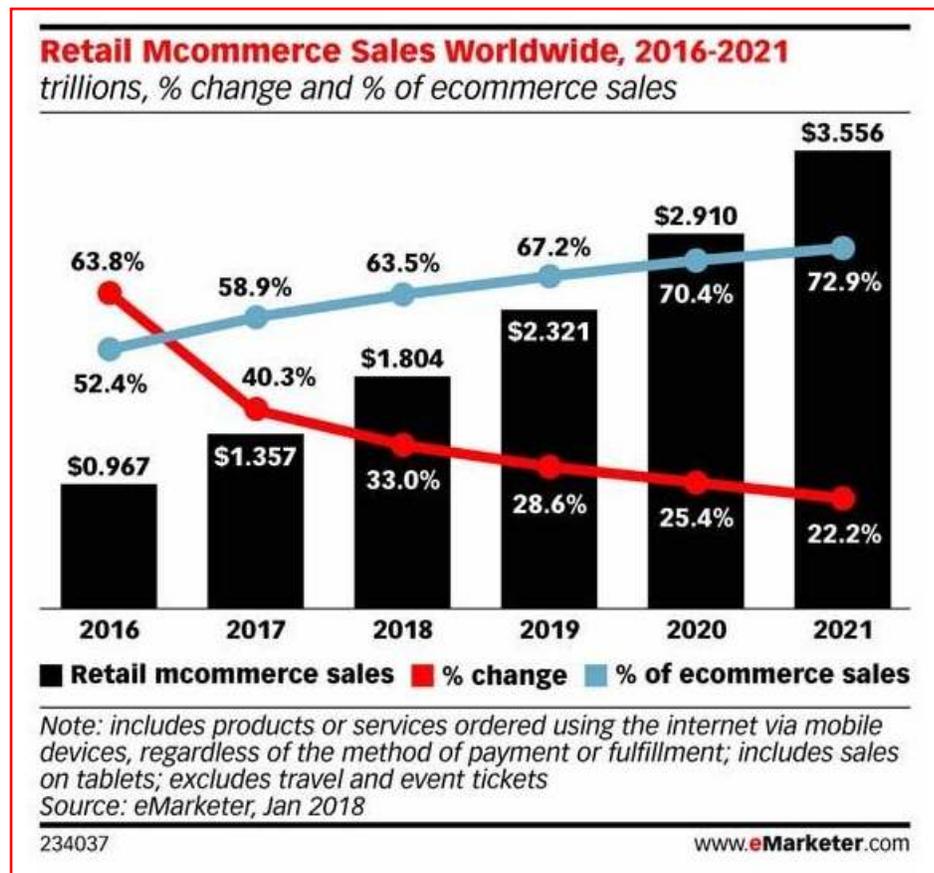
Think about it – if you visited an ecommerce website and it had the blaring “Not Secure” sign next to the URL, how likely would you be to fork over your credit card information?

Do your website and your visitors a favor and get an SSL certificate!

16. Mobile Usability

In July of 2019, Google switched to a [mobile-first index](#). This means that Google will see the mobile version of a website as the baseline for indexing and determining rankings.

Combining this with the fact that mobile commerce is growing exponentially year after year, there is no longer an excuse for ecommerce websites to forgo mobile usability.



In the process of implementing your ecommerce SEO strategy, you need to consider several crucial configuration factors:

- Responsive design
- Dynamic serving
- Use of separate URLs

In regards to the mobile-first index, there are a handful of best practices to follow:

- Use structured data
- Use correct canonical tags
- Make sure [Smartphone Googlebot](#) can access your site's pages
- Use equivalent text, images, and videos for both mobile and desktop versions

17. AMP

The AMP Project ([Accelerated Mobile Pages](#)) is sponsored by Google and defines a clear standard framework for quick-loading mobile pages.

These standards essentially inhibit developers from using components that delay loading times – such as advertising tags.

In regards to SEO, we all know that Google loves fast-loading pages; using AMP can work to boost your pages' mobile rankings.

Additionally, as what should come as no shock, Google search ranking algorithms prefer AMP pages.

AMP, however, can cause problems for ecommerce websites. AMP is typically best for static web pages; meaning it can cause problems on dynamic ecommerce pages that involve JavaScript features.

The truth of the matter is that AMP and ecommerce pages do not work well together – at least not yet.

While there are alternatives, it's recommended to [hold off on AMP](#) for the time being.

18. Use the Latest Technology

This should go without saying.

We live in an age where cybercrime is an everyday occurrence – sadly enough.

Ecommerce websites can be extremely vulnerable if they are not upgrading their systems, security, performing updates, etc. on a regular basis.

Always remember, cyber attackers are working around the clock to find holes and weak spots in the current ecommerce technology.

This is why the **major platforms** like Magento, Shopify, BigCommerce, and so on are constantly working to refine their systems.

Even though the price tags on the most cutting edge ecommerce technology may be steep, it's nothing compared to the potential cost of a data breach – which comes with side effects like loss in customer trust, poor reviews, and a slew of other nasty problems.

19. Platform Migration

To follow up on the last section about using the latest ecommerce technology, this will likely involve a [platform migration](#) – at some point or another.

When you carry out this task, you need to be very careful to avoid losing SEO value.

In this process, there are many precautions to keep in mind:

- **Generate a list of ALL existing URLs** – This is to ensure you can properly reference and redirect pages during the migration.
- **List down which changes will occur during the migration** – Changes in menu navigation, breadcrumb navigation, site hierarchy, URL naming conventions, etc.
- **Build a list of new URLs that will be implemented on the new site.**
- **Create a redirect map** – Cross-reference all old URLs with the new ones once the site is migrated.
- **Make note of all manually-built links.**
- **Create a list of your top-performing pages.**
- **Keep tabs on your search rankings.**

Once the new site is launched, make it a point to monitor and crawl the site to ensure everything has been cross-checked and there are no blaring errors.

20. Use the Latest Technology

Hopefully, you are already watching your GSC and GA data like a hawk.

In terms of an ecommerce site, you should always be looking at Search Console for data about your most profitable keywords, your best/worst performing pages, and how many inbound links you are getting.

In terms of Google Analytics, some of the most important trends to watch involve how people are finding your ecommerce website (and converting).

For instance, if lots of people are finding your online store via Facebook and Instagram, this is a sign that running ad campaigns on these platforms to boost traffic (and hopefully, sales) would be a smart move.

Additionally, ecommerce website owners should always be keeping a close eye on their bounce rate and conversions. If you are getting tons of visitors, yet have a high bounce rate and few conversions, this is a sign that your SEO efforts are driving in the wrong traffic.

Insights on these two platforms are the lifeblood of how you grow your ecommerce website.

If you aren't already, be sure you're checking up on them every day!

Wrapping Up

Ecommerce sites need to consider several aspects of technical SEO.

The key here is to identify and resolve the SEO-related issues right there and then to avoid disastrous consequences in the long run.

Hopefully, the 20 essentials mentioned in this checklist will prove to be great starting points to get your technical ecommerce SEO in order.

Give them a try and see if your website will drive more sales conversions.



A Guide to On-Page SEO for Ecommerce Website

By:  Sergey Grybniak



On-page SEO can help your ecommerce website rank higher, engage users, drive more traffic, and convert more leads.

People typically start their product research with a search (usually on Google).

To make an informed buying decision, they usually:

- Compare prices and features.
- Read reviews.
- Search for tips and advice.

If your website isn't visible when people are searching for the products you sell, you're losing out on potential customers and profits.

Let's examine some of the most significant concepts for improving on-page SEO and winning valuable organic traffic.

Keyword Research & Optimization

If you want people to find you, you have to use the right words.

If you want greater visibility in search engines, you have to use the right words.

Notice a pattern there?

You must optimize for both people and search engines.

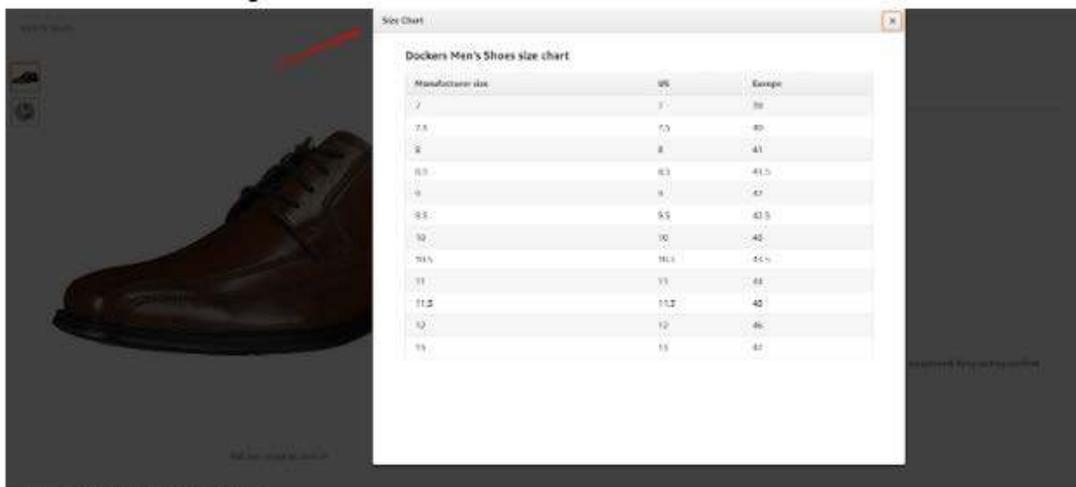
You can choose from many useful [keyword research tools](#).

For example, Ahrefs Keywords Explorer provides keyword suggestions for any business niche or search engine. You can monitor and manage the metrics that reflect how efficiently your keywords match user queries.

Some [other free keyword research tools](#) include Google Trends, Keyword Shitter, Google Correlate, Wordtracker Scout, and Google Search Console.

Here are a few tips on how to use the keywords you find:

- Place the most important keywords in page titles, headers, subheaders, paragraph copy, product descriptions, image file names and alt text, meta title and description, and URLs. Use different variations.
- Put all details (shipping costs, user reviews, return policy) on the product page. If the customer has to leave the page to look for extra information, they are more likely to leave the website altogether.



- Provide users with real value by writing a helpful copy. Avoid unnecessary keyword stuffing, which can appear suspicious to Google.
- Update your seasonal sales in a timely manner. Don't disappoint your customers.

Content

Product Page

Remember that people, not Google, buy your services and products, so it is vital to optimizing your ecommerce pages to satisfy users' intentions.

Start by evaluating your competitors' websites. Your analysis can shed some light on which factors are worthy of attention.

Look for:

- Multilingual websites.
- Specific colors used in product page designs.
- Characteristics of services/products.
- The number and the appearance of calls to action, or CTAs.

To improve your on-page SEO, consider removing unavailable products from your index. When left in indexing for an extended period of time, these pages can eventually hurt your ranking.

You can arrange your work in the following manner:

- Compare the number of indexed pages in Google Search Console with the number of indexed pages from your Sitemap, as well as the number of pages from Google organic.
- Make sure that only pages from your Sitemap are open for Google indexing.

Category Pages

Ecommerce website owners often pay the most attention to product pages, landing pages, and the homepage of their websites, forgetting that category pages in their catalog should also look great because they directly influence conversions and search rankings.

If web users do not like the appearance of a category page, they will not even open product pages, and all your SEO efforts will be in vain.

Here are some key metrics to monitor in order to keep your category pages optimized:

- **Conversion rate:** The ratio comparing the number of sales to the number of site visitors.
- **Engagement:** The time visitors spend on the website's pages. The longer people spend viewing your content, the more likely they are to buy something.
- **Click-through rate:** Transitions from category pages to product pages.
- **Revenue per visitor:** The ratio between your revenue and the number of visitors. This metric is even more important than the conversion rate. It is better to have fewer clients buying expensive items than many customers buying inexpensive products.CTAs.

Blog

A decade ago, blogging was mainly perceived as an entertaining add-on, but today, this powerful tool is actively used by ecommerce companies.

A [blog can help your ecommerce](#) site deliver valuable information to customers, gain their loyalty, and build strong relationships. Also, by incorporating popular keywords into blog articles, you will attract more visits from search engines.

Here are some criteria for high-quality SEO optimized content:

- It should include strong queries that bring your pages to the top of search rankings.
- Your posts should answer questions that are frequently asked by your clients: how to use some products, how to choose among several similar services, how to extend the lifespan of items purchased, etc.
- Apart from text, your articles should include vivid and captivating visuals to break up text segments and keep readers engaged.

- Your articles should contain links to product and category pages in your catalog.
- You should thoroughly proofread and edit your content for grammatical errors, as well as misleading or obsolete information.

Meta Title & Description

The meta title and description are short but meaningful elements. They give you favorable exposure in search engines because web users see them when choosing from among a number of similar sources.

Your meta title and description should briefly summarize the subject of the page in a way that makes people want to visit and further explore it.

H tags

Header tags (H1, H2, H3, and so on) are extremely important, since they make up the structure of your articles. When visiting blogs and product pages, web users first look at headers and, within a few seconds, decide whether the material is worthy of their attention.

Also, headers are valuable from an SEO standpoint. Google pays more attention to these tags than to the body text.

Keeping in mind these two nuances, compile H tags reflecting an idea of each textual segment and including relevant keywords.

Reviews

You may run a top-notch advertising campaign and sing the praises of your company through all available information channels, but prospective clients will still approach your brand with a bit of skepticism, suspecting you are emphasizing your products' advantages just to hit high sales.

It is another story when web users read unbiased testimonials on independent review platforms.

People tend to trust other consumers, and **91%** of all consumers trust online reviews as much as personal recommendations from friends or family.

Posting a lot of positive reviews on your product pages can pay off big. Negative comments won't have as much of an impact, as long as they are in the minority.

Let's be honest, every product has some drawbacks, and the absence of dissatisfied buyers may seem suspicious.

The image shows two screenshots of customer reviews for a mattress. The first review is titled "Best mattress I ever owned" and is dated September 19, 2018. The reviewer is a female named Heidi. The review text says: "It's the best mattress I ever slept on in my life!! I am a side and stomach sleeper. Linda at Macy's in Reno is the best salesperson. She introduced me to the Hotel Collection bed after my displeasure with other brands. It is the very most comfortable!! I do not like firm nor do I like too soft. It is just right!! I am so very happy now. Even brand new I slept comfortably the very first night." The reviewer has checked "Yes, I recommend this product." The second review is titled "Side Sleeper with Back Problems--Perfect Mattress" and is dated August 17, 2018. The reviewer is a female named Heidi. The review text says: "Had researched several brands and options, and tried many, many mattresses in several stores. This one by far was the one I kept returning to. I happened to catch it during a sale which was a bonus. The level of comfort, combined with needed support exceeded other options with no contest. The salesperson was more knowledgeable than the sales folks in other stores. In other stores they basically knew the price and could read the brochure. I can do that on my own. The Macy's rep helped compare and contrast, and discussed how the various mattresses were made. Non-pretend womanly is a plus. I have back problems and am a side sleeper, this mattress is perfect!" The reviewer has checked "Yes, I recommend this product."

Customer opinions are more helpful for on-page SEO than you may think.

Reviews provide original, fresh and consistent content that is helpful for both search engines and potential customers. Not to mention that reviews often contain relevant keywords, which come as an added bonus.

Encouraging users to leave reviews is more or less a marketing goal. As an SEO specialist, your task is to analyze existing comments and point out their quality and quantity.

The best way to gain more reviews is through well-thought-out email marketing and by making it easy and convenient for shoppers to leave reviews on your website.

Content Audit

You will never know if your content is truly effective if you don't evaluate it.

Regular analysis and updating outdated information will help you achieve excellence.

Choose a specific point in time to revise all your published content. That could be once per month or once per year.

Monitor the behavior of your target audience in terms of comments, clicks, average reading time, and other metrics.

Analyze questions that customers frequently ask of your customer support team, and use them as topics for your blog articles.

Also, if you notice some interesting content solutions on your competitors' websites, be sure to leverage them.

Images

Image optimization is a smart investment of your time, as it has the potential to improve your page speed tremendously.

Here are the most crucial points to keep in mind when working with images:

- **Perfect format:** PNG and GIF for large areas of solid colors, JPG for photos.
- **Compression:** There is a variety of free or paid tools and online services to compress your images.
- **Aesthetics:** Product images should be appealing, awaken positive emotions, and stimulate web users to place an order. It is best to enlist the support of a professional photographer to showcase your products from the best possible perspective.
- **SEO:** Incorporate keywords into alt text, especially text surrounding images.

Video

When working with video, pay attention to the following practices:

- Use MP4 format, as it produces the smallest file size.
- Select the optimal file size with your visitors' screen size in mind.
- Remember to compress all video files.
- Reduce the length when possible.
- Upload the video to YouTube, Vimeo, or other similar resources instead of serving them locally.

User Experience

Checking and improving usability is an essential task for every SEO specialist.

Your job is to perform an accurate analysis, including the following factors:

- How much time does the average user spend on the page?
- What is the bounce rate?
- How well do the CTAs perform?
- Which pages are most visited?

Bring your results to the table, and get your marketing and development teams involved. Issues that negatively affect usability can be either technical or non-technical.

For instance, too many ads, poor copy, too big or too small fonts, buttons that don't work, and other issues can dramatically affect usability.

Your task is to find those weak points and to delegate relevant tasks to other team members.

Below, we list the most important elements influencing user experience.

Navigation

It should be easy for customers to find the information and products they need. Make sure your menu is convenient, intuitive, and provides the shortest pathways to different sections. When your website is pleasant and easy to use, visitors will stay there longer.

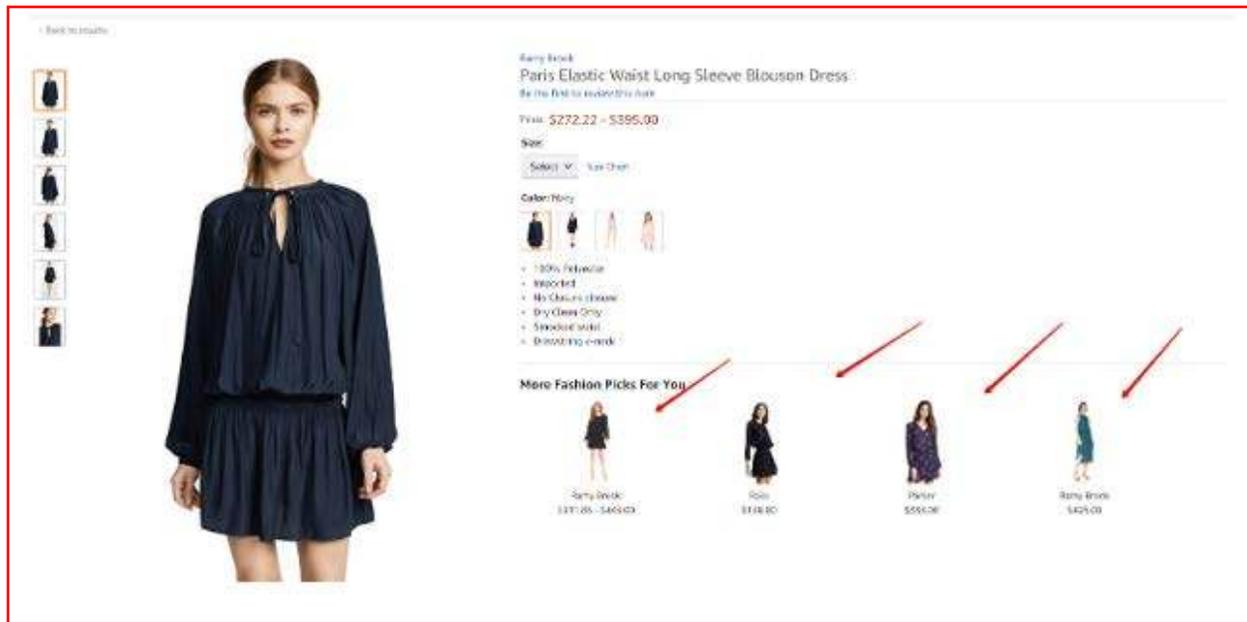
Internal Linking

Internal linking should be well-thought-out for ecommerce sites.

There are three major reasons to use internal linking:

- Simplify on-site navigation for users and offer them engaging content related to the information they are interested in.
- Help search engines to crawl your site and identify the themes of your content.
- Encourage users to stay longer on your site by visiting multiple product pages.

Let's say a customer is not totally delighted with an item they clicked on in Google SERP. Will they leave the website immediately? Not necessarily, if you offer them links to other similar options. This can be your first step toward converting leads.



Internal linking also helps establish your own anchor text. This is an excellent way to ensure your top keywords will occupy the first positions in search.

The best takeaways for a proper internal linking strategy:

- Add links where appropriate only.
- Don't place too many links with similar anchors.
- Leverage the power of **breadcrumbs** to help users understand the site's multi-level hierarchy for better navigation.
- The most clickable links are those with engaging images. Take this into consideration, to keep users on your website.

Related Products

When someone is ready to take action and buy something on your website, why not offer related products to increase your revenue?

For example, a furniture brand might offer a set of chairs to a customer buying a table. A hotel booking website might offer discounted deals on rental cars.

People appreciate helpful services that satisfy all their needs and make their lives easier.

FAQ / About Us / Contact pages

When optimizing your general pages, think about your FAQ content. People will go elsewhere if you are unable to answer their questions.

No matter how descriptive your products/services pages are, users will still have some questions. Having an informative [FAQ](#) page on your site can help fill the gap.

Make sure you cover all the basic information, including the website's security measures, shipping options, and return policies. Providing this information can increase buyer trust and skyrocket your sales.

An engaging **About Us** section will add stars to your reputation. Tell prospective clients about your history, corporate values, and your company's key merits. This lets visitors know they are dealing with a reputable business and not a fly-by-night website.

On your **Contact page**, list all the ways users can contact you, including phone and FAX numbers, email addresses, Skype, WhatsApp, social network pages, website contact forms and live chat.

Comparisons

Simplify the decision-making process for your buyers by providing a convenient product comparison tool.

It should collect and compare basic data from product descriptions and suggest the best options, based on customer needs.

Product Videos

Make videos showing how your products can be used. Choose a suitable format for your niche.

If you sell equipment, for example, provide installation and maintenance tips. Or if you sell cosmetics, you could create your own beauty vlog and publish makeup lessons.

Showing visitors how to use your products builds trust and boosts conversions.

Site search

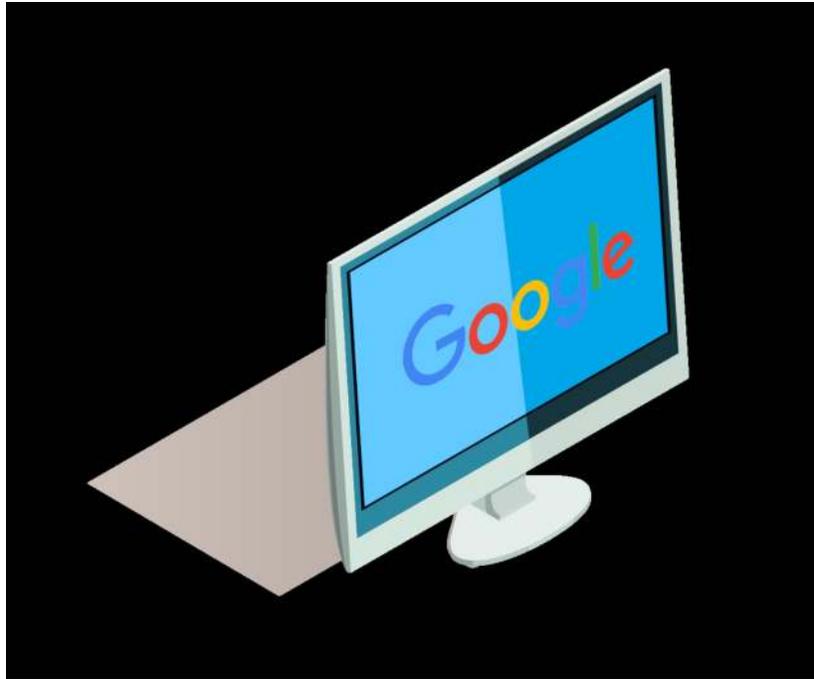
Spare your customers from having to browse through your entire site to find what they need.

A prominently displayed search box helps them quickly find the product they are looking for.

Amazon is a good example. Their search box takes shoppers directly to the desired product category.

Summary

On-page SEO can help your business grow by leaps and bounds, as well as boost your brand image in the webspace.



The Hidden Opportunity for Ecommerce Websites in Google Images

By:  Raj Nijjer



Around three-quarters of U.S. internet users regularly or always search for visual content prior to making a purchase, according to eMarketer; only 3 percent never do.

When it comes to shopping online, product images create a positive experience for potential customers.

Many experts share that featuring multiple professional images for a product helps reduce customer uncertainty, resulting in improved conversion and lower return rates.

Google Images search share is approximately **26 percent** of overall search, according to Jumpshot and Moz.

Optimized product images can drive new customer acquisition for ecommerce websites. Connecting discovery of up-to-date and accurate product information like images is key to completing a successful buyer experience on Google Images.

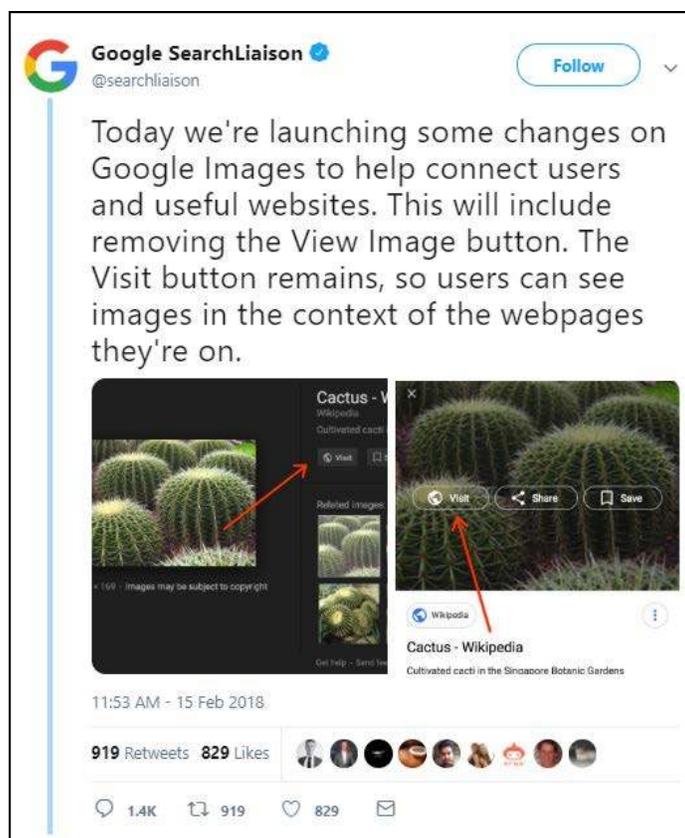
A recent Google Images change is an opportunity to acquire new quality traffic.

Google Images: What Changed?

Google **partnered with Getty Images** to create a new search results experience for Google Images users.

As result of this partnership, Google announced **two major changes to image search** that change how Google displays indexed images and refers traffic to publishers.

Moving forward, Google is removing the option to “View Image” and replacing it with “Visit Site”, theoretically shifting traffic from Google Search to publisher sites, as evidenced by Google’s Danny Sullivan in the following **tweet**:



Ecommerce marketing professionals have a tremendous opportunity to create a new or improved channel for customer acquisition through Google Image Search.

Here are three ways to optimize your product images and get them indexed in Google search for high-quality traffic with purchase intent.

1. Nail the Basics of Image Optimization

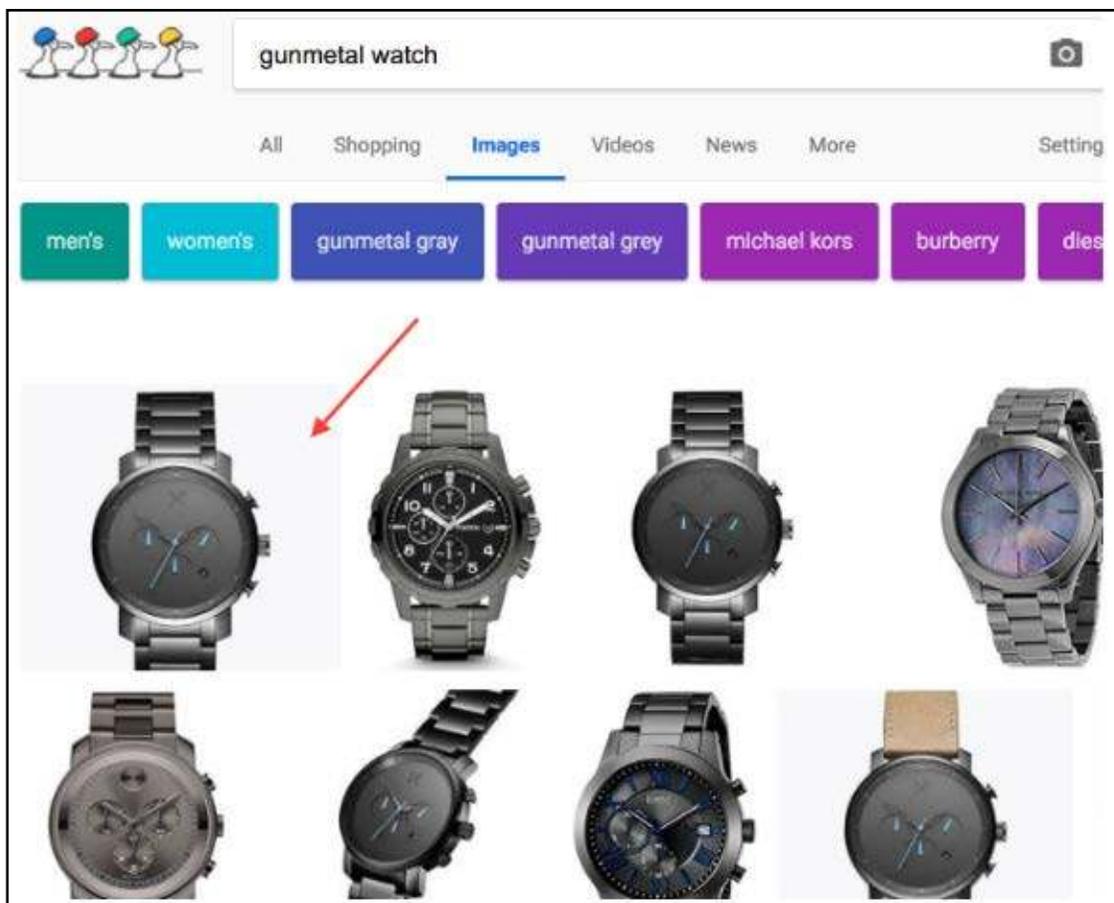
Descriptive file names are key to getting your product images found.

Also, you'll want to add optimized alternate text. Image alt attributes are a must for ecommerce websites in case an image doesn't load.

Google also uses the alt text to understand image context which has been **confirmed** by the Google webmaster team.

A great example is how MVMT Watches names their product images.

As shown in the below example of MVMT watches, if someone searches for "gunmetal watch", MVMT owns the first organic result in Google Images search, largely due to proper use of naming and image alt text.



For more help with the basics of image optimization, see [14 Important Image SEO Tips You Need to Know.](#)

2. Markup Your Images with Schema

Using structured markup to enable rich product images and product attributes lets brands attract potential searchers while they are searching for items to buy on Google or images that include products you sell.

Maintain the accuracy and freshness of your product information, so your customers find the relevant, current items they're looking for.

Make Google Images your storefront window with structured markup. A must for any ecommerce brand or retailer is adding structured data markup to websites and ensure Google understands the product images and related attributes.

Google suggests adding markup to your product pages so they can provide detailed product information in rich search results, including Google Images. High intent searchers can see product price, availability, and review ratings displayed on search results.

Google has enabled a new report for **'Products'** in Search Console for ecommerce sites that use structured markup to annotate their product information.

This new report allows a brand or search marketer to see any pending issues for markup on your site. Once an issue is fixed, the report can be used to validate the resolution of your issues by recrawling your affected pages. [Learn more about the rich result status reports.](#)

3. Show Your Product Information in Google Search & Google Images

Another must for any marketing professional working with a retailer or ecommerce website is having accurate information about your products show up in Google Search and Google Images.

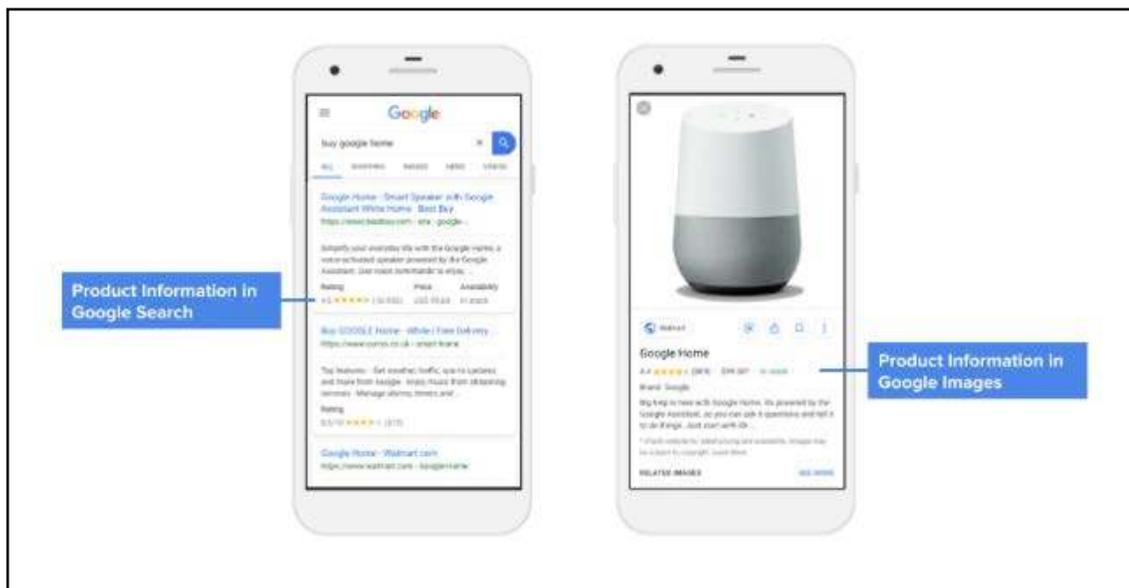
With the [recent changes](#) to Google product feeds, you can now update your product information in real-time to match related queries from high intent searches or buyers.

The new expansion of the Google product feed is boon for retail brands and marketers looking to properly display their product information (like images) in real-time.

Imagine a fast fashion brand that changes its product inventory quarterly or brands offering exclusive or limited edition products that they launch and sunset on Google Search and Images.

Marketers can now easily upload their product feed and images to [Google's Merchant Center](#) making them eligible for immediate display in search results for web and images search.

The product information (like images) is ranked based on the relevance to search queries from the user, and best of all, it's free to use. This functionality is now available to brands in the US with additional countries rolling out soon.



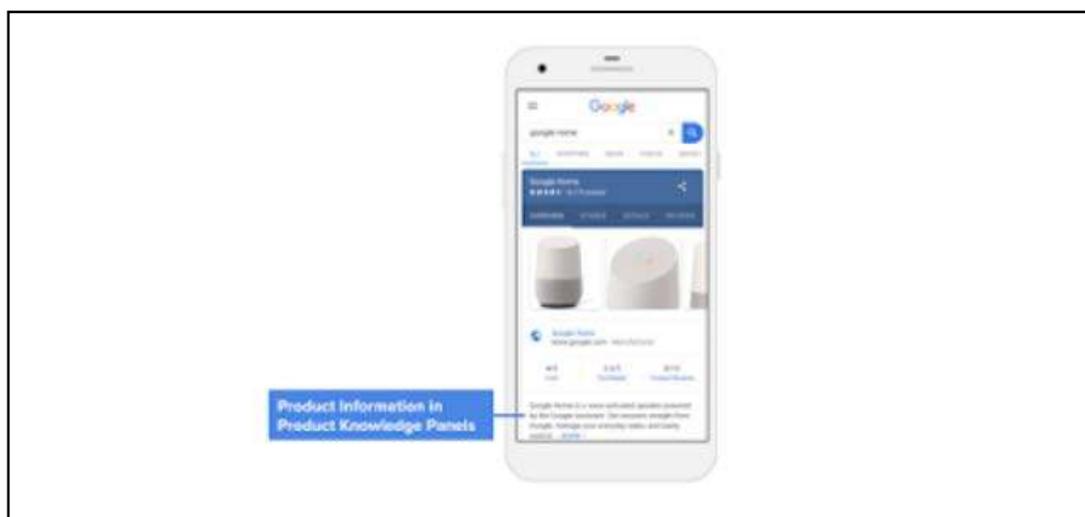
4. Show Your Product Images in Google Knowledge Cards

Google gives manufacturers control over their brand and product information.

Brands that manufacture their own products, original equipment manufacturers (OEMs) and/or B2B companies will attest that getting their product images to show accurately in Google is imperative for discovery in their category and overall brand awareness.

Another recent announcement from Google is the ability to update your product information (like Images) through their [Google Manufacturer Center](#).

You can now update your product description, variants, and rich content like images and videos that can show on the product's knowledge panel.

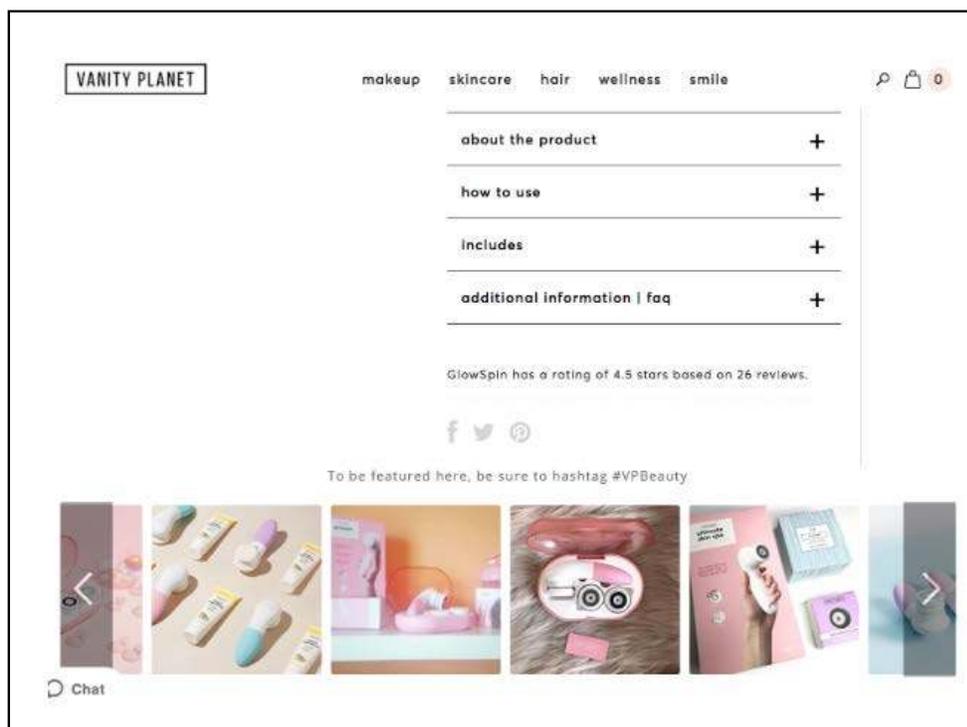


5. Leverage Your Customers for Authentic Images

Harness the power of **user-generated content** to increase trust and conversions. Add customer images throughout your ecommerce website.

Encourage your customers to post their images (with your products) to platforms like Facebook and Instagram, then repurpose that content on your product and checkout pages.

Follow brand leaders like Vanity Planet, which encourages customer engagement and shares their UGC throughout the shopper journey:



6. Compress Your Images

Last but not least, ensure that your images load fast and are optimized for speed.

There are many tools, such as TinyPNG, that help you compress your website images.

Also, most hosting platforms offer CDN services for fast delivery. An optimized file size improves your odds for indexing in Google Images.

Properly followed and executed, these six image search tactics can give your ecommerce website a boost in traffic and sales.



How to Create a Content Strategy for Ecommerce Sites

By:  Miranda Miller



On your solid foundation of a technically sound site with a logical architecture designed for the best user experience possible, you can now begin to craft a content strategy that will attract – then convert – your ideal audience.

Hopefully, you've worked your way through keyword and competitive research in earlier chapters and have those insights at hand to help inform these next steps.

Whether you're **updating an existing content strategy** or starting from scratch, guide your efforts by applying a popular business innovation framework that accounts for three key factors:

- People
- Technology
- Process

People

There are two main groups of people to consider: those driving your content efforts, and your intended audience and customers.

Who Will Lead Your Content Team?

“The way you structure your team sends a strong message about what your team is currently prioritizing and deprioritizing.” – Kipp Bodnar, HubSpot

Who will lead your company's content efforts? In smaller ecommerce operations, your **Managing Editor** and **Content Marketing Manager/Content Director** might be one and the same, while in mid-sized to large companies you're more likely to need each in a separate role.

Leading a content marketing team requires a razor-sharp eye to detail, excellent copywriting and editing skills, and a journalist's ability to locate and extract, analyze, and summarize sometimes complex information and data.

It is critical now that content marketing leaders are comfortable with the concept of martech and understand how it can or will be used to help you reach your ecommerce goals.

You don't necessarily need to find someone already experienced in your company's own stack or platform – after all, there are now thousands of martech tools on the market. You do, however, need a leader who can quickly get up to speed with the technologies and tools of your choice.

Alongside all of this analytical mindset, your ideal content marketing leader will bring equal parts creativity and communication skills.

This person will be responsible for not only communicating content marketing's successes across the organization, but also for consulting and collaborating with various internal stakeholders to ensure that the interests and needs of operations, product development, sales, and other functions are represented in the content strategy.

You're also looking to this person to motivate and manage what may be a large content team comprised of a wide range of creatives and analytical types.

The right person for a leadership role in content marketing already has proven experience managing teams to achieve specific business outcomes.

Larger brands may choose to work with a **Content Strategist**. When hiring a strategist, seek out a professional who understands good content but also understands at a high level the state of search and content discovery.

This person is responsible for ensuring that your content efforts align with your company's goals. They should have a deep understanding of your brand and the needs of audience members in your particular area of ecommerce.

Building Your Content Team

Who do you need on your team? Moreover, what core accountabilities do you need to ensure are covered?

Depending on the size of your operation, you might have one team member covering multiple areas of accountability – or, you could have dozens of team members on just one.

You might also choose to outsource specific accountabilities to freelancers, or even have an agency provide the bulk of your content creation.

Either way, make sure these critical functions of your content marketing operation are covered:

- Content creation including writing, photography, graphic design, video editing, etc.
- Editing with a particular eye to brand voice, content optimization for search, alignment with customer journey, and formatting for specific channels.
- Project management and prioritization.
- Content promotion, whether via PR or in paid channels.

Who Is Your Ideal Audience

Persona development and customer journey mapping are **two key elements of any content strategy**. These aren't one-off activities, but living and breathing guidelines you'll revisit and update often as performance data dictates.

Persona Development

Personas help you understand:

- Who it is you're trying to connect with.
- What problems you can solve for them.
- Where you'll find them online.
- How to speak their language.

You'll use them in content planning to recognize gaps and opportunities, and your content creators will use them to understand who it is they're attempting to reach.

There are a lot of persona development resources out there, but I like Adam Heitzman's step-by-step **Buyer Personas: A Beginner's Guide for Marketers** for those just getting started.

Customer Journey Mapping

I'm a fan of [Avinash Kaushik's "See, Think, Do, Care"](#) customer journey framework as an ecommerce alternative to more traditional, linear models.

In this framework, your audience segments are defined by behaviors, not demographics or psychographics:

- **See:** The largest qualified audience available to you.
- **Think:** your largest addressable qualified audience with some expressed commercial intent.
- **Do:** Your largest addressable qualified audience with a great deal of commercial intent.
- **Care:** Current customers, as defined by two commercial transactions.

Each piece of content must solve a need for your target audience, whether that need is informational, navigational, or transactional in nature.

Mapping content to your customer's journey is an important tactic to incorporate in your content planning on a go-forward basis.

However, there is also great value in applying this retroactively to your existing content body with a content audit. This can be

tricky for companies that had already developed a volume of content before applying a defined content strategy.

Mapping existing content can help identify valuable opportunities to update or re-release your best content and also highlight content gaps you can plan to fill in new content development.

Setting Your People Up for Content Marketing Success

With the right people in place to get your business and products in front of motivated consumers in the moments that matter, it's up to you to ensure that they have the resources needed to execute.

The B2C brands that perform best in content marketing spent **26 percent** of their total marketing budget on content marketing in 2018. A growing portion of that budget is being used to provide the technology and tools marketers need to create, optimize, and promote content.

Technology

Emerging technologies – particularly those with AI or machine learning elements – are driving a lot of really interesting opportunities for ecommerce companies looking to personalize content and interact with prospects in more meaningful ways.

Here are a few important considerations to keep in mind when you're choosing the tech to power your content strategy.

Stack or Suite?

B2C companies use an average of **four digital technologies** in their content marketing efforts, with analytics tools and email marketing software leading the pack.

What we're seeing now though is a shift away from using one tool to solve one particular problem.

The power of AI is better realized when the insights generated by one tool can be used by another. Marketing leaders are therefore finding that disparate datasets and manual workarounds are unnecessary and impede their content marketing performance.

Organizations are now able to deploy entire suites of seamlessly integrated tools; this may incorporate several different functions in your content marketing, or content may be just one facet of a wider-ranging platform.

Automation or Intelligent Automation?

We've been using automation for years to take some of the legwork out of repetitive tasks such as keyword research and competitive research.

With the advent of AI, we've moved far beyond simple automations to intelligent automations, where our technologies are not only completing tasks but executing optimizations, prioritizing tasks, and even making decisions.

Automation relies on humans to feed the right data and instructions into the system, in order to generate the right result.

Intelligent automation allows us to feed massive, unstructured data into systems which then analyze and activate the information.

For example, early content tools automated the process of calculating keyword density in content(a useless metric today).

Now, intelligent automation can:

- Analyze search data and on-site consumer behavior.
- Identify content gaps in the customer journey.
- Create content to fill those gaps.
- Target it to searchers who display similar behavior in future.

It's critical that you identify what it is that you want your content marketing technology to do and how you will measure the results of those efforts.

Who Owns Your Content Marketing Tech?

Making the best use of any technology requires a deep understanding of how it works on the part of the operator. However, in content marketing, creative and interpersonal skills are just as critical.

Who is ultimately responsible for the implementation, operation and success of your content marketing technology?

In smaller companies, this may be the Content Marketing Manager.

In larger ecommerce brands, you may consider creating a single, defined role for martech management (or even content marketing management on its own).

This person must understand your business goals and, at a deep level, how your tech supports them.

Process

With your people in place and supported by the right technologies, make sure that scalable process is part of your ecommerce content marketing workflow.

Roles & Workflow

Avoid redundancies and conflict in your content workflow by taking the time to clearly define roles.

This will almost certainly include a list of tasks for which each of your team members is responsible, but should also include an accounting of which business and marketing outcomes each person owns.

- What approvals and permissions are needed prior to content publication? Who is responsible for obtaining those permissions and moving each piece of content forward?
- Which team members have access to each piece of technology, and how are they expected to use it to perform their own duties?

- How is reporting handled and who is responsible for sharing wins and opportunities back to the rest of the team?
- How often will you have meetings and who needs to be in them?
- How are team members expected to collaborate/communicate and how can you facilitate those processes?
- Do content team members have open access to the internal stakeholders whose knowledge is needed to inform authentic content?
- Similarly, how does your content team engage operations, sales, R&D, and other stakeholders?

Editorial Calendar

Your Editorial Calendar is a living, breathing guide to your ecommerce company's content efforts that each member should be able to access, even if only in view-only mode.

Google Sheets is a great choice for this, unless you have a comprehensive marketing suite that includes an editorial calendar as an option.

Ideally, your Editorial Calendar will document:

- Content ideas
- Content ideas that have been approved as concepts to move forward
- The purpose of each piece
- The channel on which each piece will be published
- Channel-specific information (eg.: for emails, subject line and audience segment; for blogs, categories and tags, etc.)
- Who is responsible for creating the content
- Research and information required for each piece
- Supporting content, background content, and pieces to link back to
- Calls to action
- Approvals required
- Submission and publication target dates
- Status updates and notes on progress

For best results, have one team member “own” the calendar (the most logical person for this is your Managing Editor or whoever fulfills this function). This person is responsible for updating the calendar as each piece progresses through your company’s workflow.

Content Inventory

Your content inventory may be a separate tab in your Editorial Calendar, or it could be another document altogether.

Creating a content inventory can be challenging, especially if you've been publishing for a number of years and have a large volume of undocumented content already. It's well worth it, though.

Your content inventory should track for each piece:

- Name/title
- URL if it has a permanent address; draft URL if it doesn't
- Topic, broad category, or product/service it pertains to, where applicable
- Date of publication or distribution
- Metrics that matter (you might choose annual or monthly pageviews, search visibility, conversions to a specific action, etc.)

Refer to the content inventory in your content meetings as you plan new pieces.

Are there opportunities to update existing content that's still performing well, rather than starting over?

Are there pieces in your existing inventory you can use to supplement new content with internal linking?

Bringing It All Together

Content strategy is complex, but incredibly important to get right.

Documenting your goals is great, but you need a fully developed strategy to guide your efforts, ensure that team members stay on track, and refer back to in order to justify the actions you're taking and decisions you're making.

Documenting it doesn't make it set in stone. In fact, the most successful content strategies are revisited and updated regularly as results dictate.



How to Capture Featured Snippets for Ecommerce

Sponsored By:

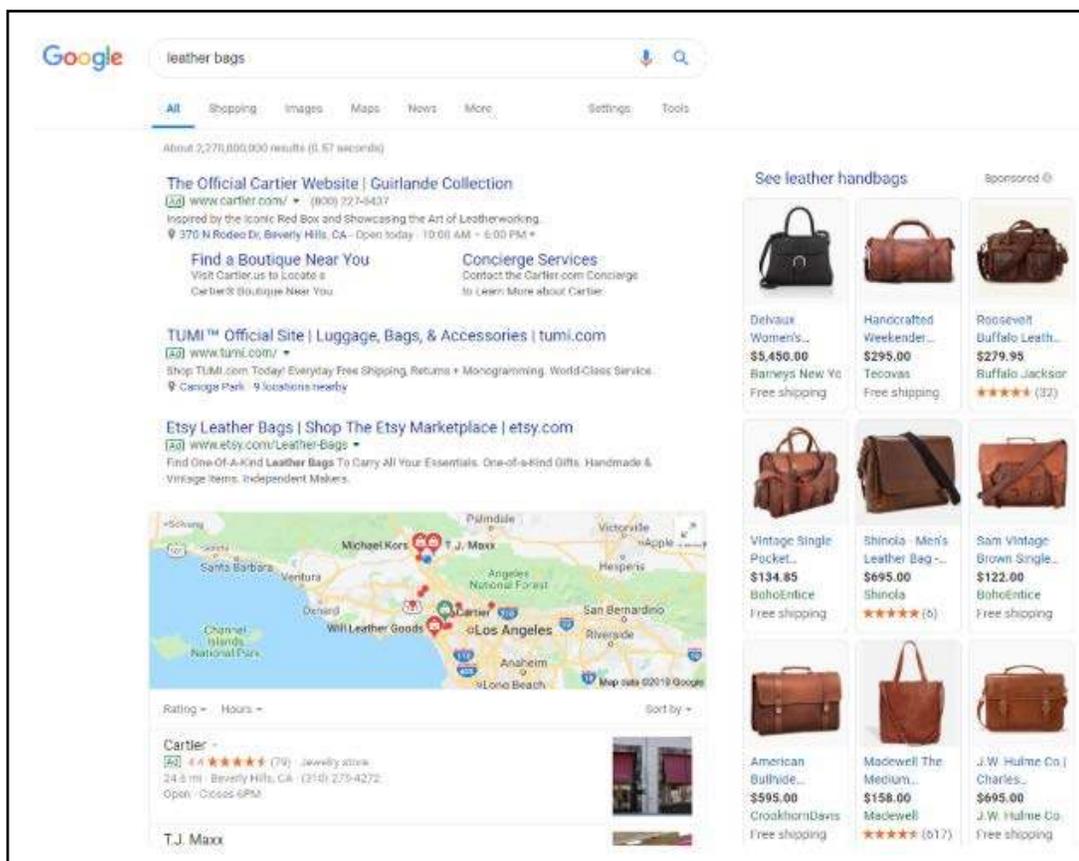


When you hear the word “ecommerce,” featured snippets (those coveted answer boxes that sit in position 0) probably aren’t the first thing to come to mind.



You likely think of traditional PPC ads, shopping ads, or even local map ads — and rightfully so!

Paid results dominate today’s ecommerce SERP landscape, typically pushing any organic result below the fold (a reality that’s even more pronounced on mobile).



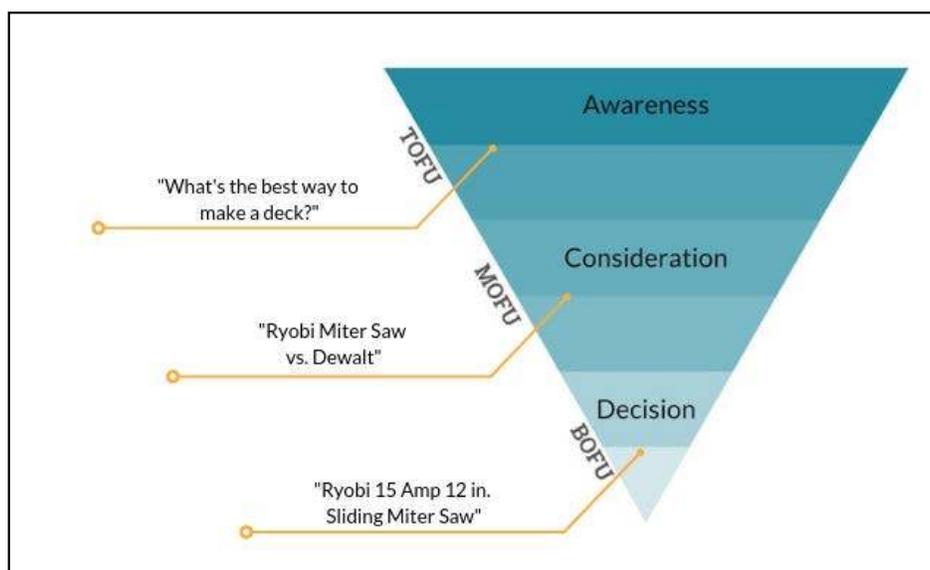
Ecommerce has traditionally lived in this bottom-funnel, transactional space. But this is a chapter on capturing featured snippets for ecommerce after all, so we're going to show you a different way to think about ecommerce rankings.

Going Further up the Funnel to Target Ecommerce Featured Snippets

Since most transactional intent queries return ad-dominated SERPs, it's time to start looking further up the funnel at informational and consideration queries.

To review, the three (oversimplified) phases of the sales funnel are:

- Awareness (top of the funnel or "TOFU")
- Consideration (middle of the funnel or "MOFU")
- Decision (bottom of the funnel or "BOFU")



Since it's typically informational-intent, research-focused queries that trigger featured snippets, the sweet spot for ecommerce featured snippets is going to be top and mid-funnel queries.

Why Focus on Featured Snippets at All?

The benefit in targeting featured snippets for ecommerce may not be obvious at first glance. Why target informational keywords when you could focus all your energy on your money-making, bottom-funnel keywords?

Because people research before they buy.

Pre-purchase research happens in varying degrees depending on the product, but the fact is, your customer is taking the time to research which product is a perfect solution for their need.

Capturing featured snippets is a chance to meet your customers during their research phase and use that content to create a frictionless path to purchase.

Do People Click on Featured Snippets?

Various case studies have shown that clicks and traffic increase, sometimes significantly, for pages featured in an answer box. While people do click on featured snippets, even featured snippets that don't result in a click are a huge win for online retailers because of the brand awareness and perceived authority they create.

Think about it. If you were an automaker that captured the featured snippet for “what’s the difference between four-wheel drive and all-wheel drive,” you’re the first brand they see, as well as the brand selected as the chosen answer to that question — the de facto authority on that topic.

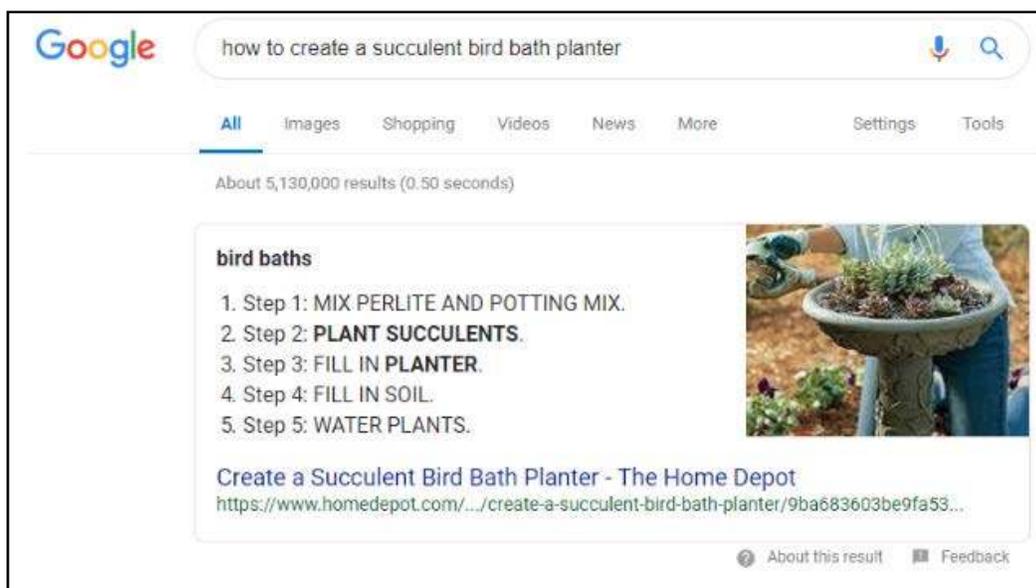
Ecommerce websites that rank in featured snippets not only get the benefit of relevant traffic, but also brand awareness and authority.

Ecommerce Featured Snippets in the Wild

If you’re having trouble picturing what this could look like on your ecommerce site, you’re not alone. Marketers have been trying to figure out the best way to incorporate content onto ecommerce websites for years, and while there’s no one-size-fits-all solution that applies to every business, try taking a page from these retailers’ books.

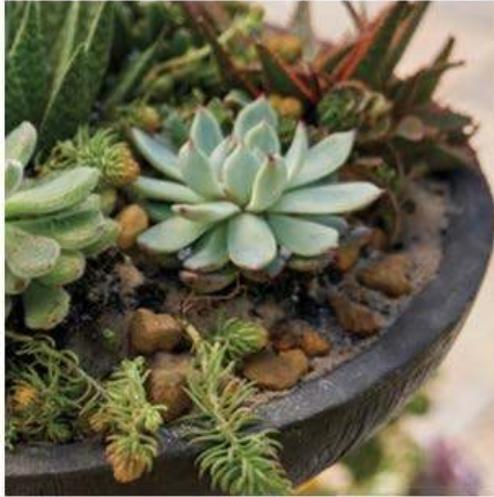
The Home Depot's DIY Initiative

The Home Depot recently launched a DIY section with hundreds of helpful how-to articles and videos. They're using these pages to capture featured snippets for top-funnel queries like:



Not only that, but The Home Depot figured out a way to go beyond awareness and use these articles to encourage transactions as well. In the example below, you can see how The Home Depot has incorporated product links naturally into the section outlining tools and materials you'll need for the job.

Create a Succulent Bird Bath Planter



TIME REQUIRED: Under 2 hours

DIFFICULTY: Beginner

Add succulents to a bird bath to create a simple outdoor planter garden that makes a beautiful decorative statement as a landscape focal point. Use this easy-to-follow project guide and create your own Succulent Bird Bath.

TOOLS & MATERIALS



Watering Cans
Shop product



Garden Trowels
Shop product



Succulents & Cactu...
Shop product



Bagged
Shop product



Soil Amendments
Shop product



Potting Soil
Shop product



Bird Baths
Shop product

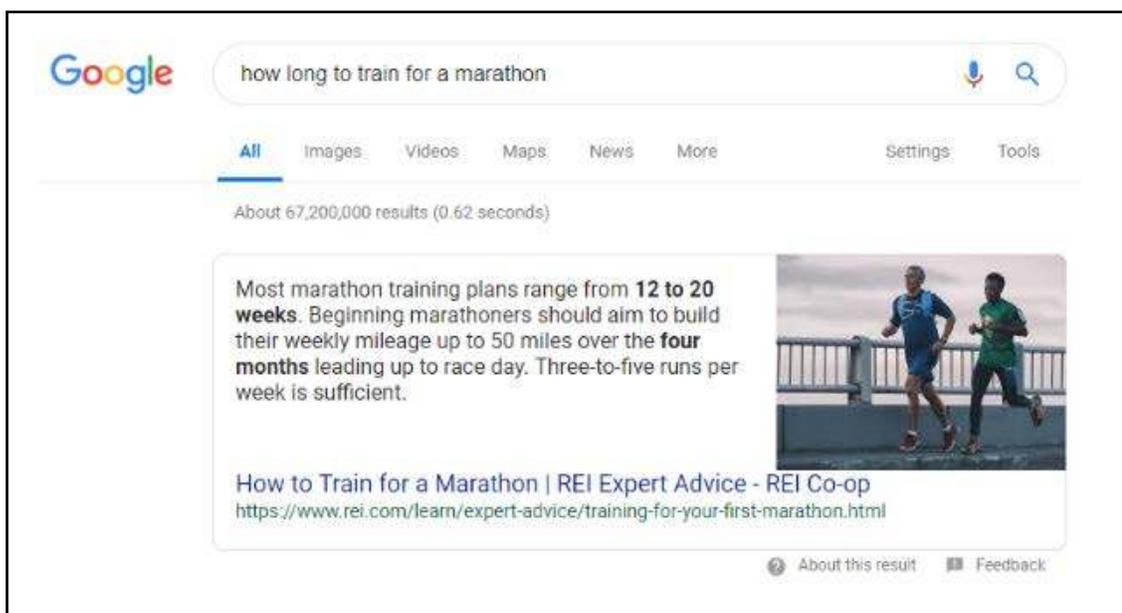
Hershey's "What's Inside?"

Hershey added a section to their website called "What's Inside," which they use to talk about the ingredients they use in their products. In this example, you can see how the section on Kosher products was able to secure Hershey a featured snippet.



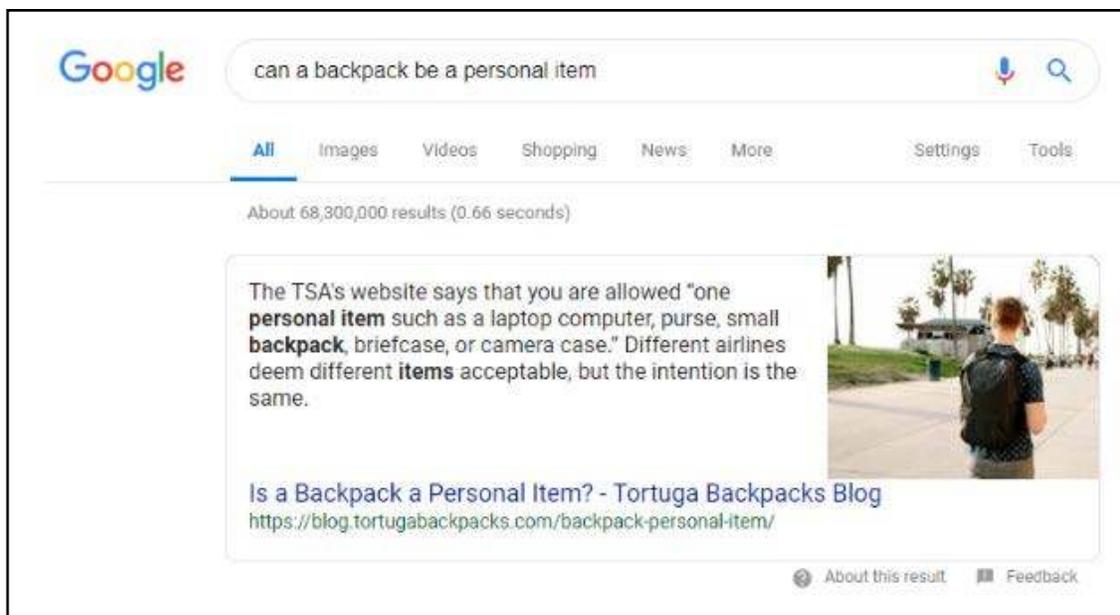
REI's Expert Advice

In addition to their blog, REI has an “expert advice” section on their website dedicated to helping people learn new skills, choose gear, and prep for adventures. Content from this section ranks in tons of featured snippets, like this one below:



Tortuga's "Packsmith" blog

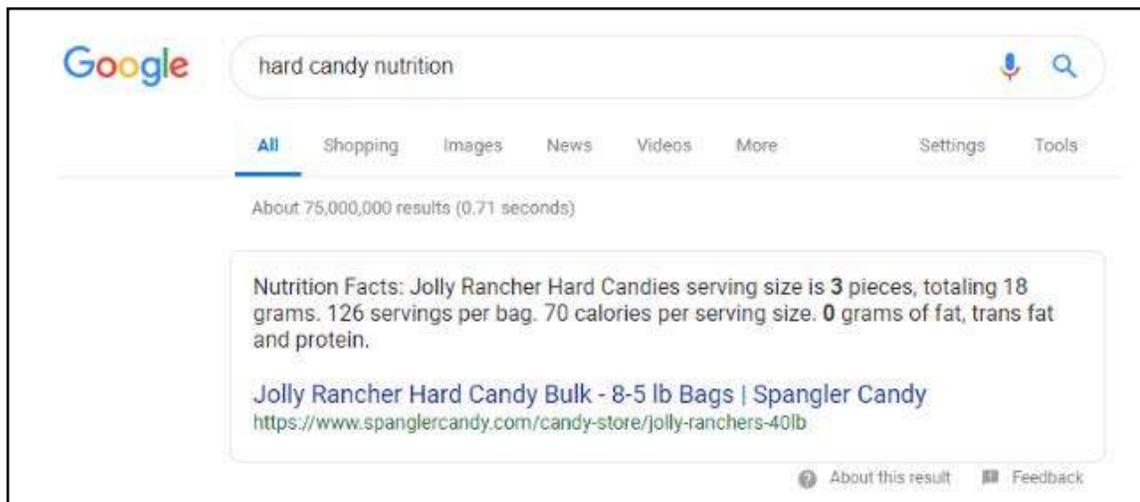
Tortuga's blog "Packsmith" is a great example of an ecommerce site that's also successfully running a blog that ranks in featured snippets. They use this informational content to drive awareness to their brand as well as promote their products.



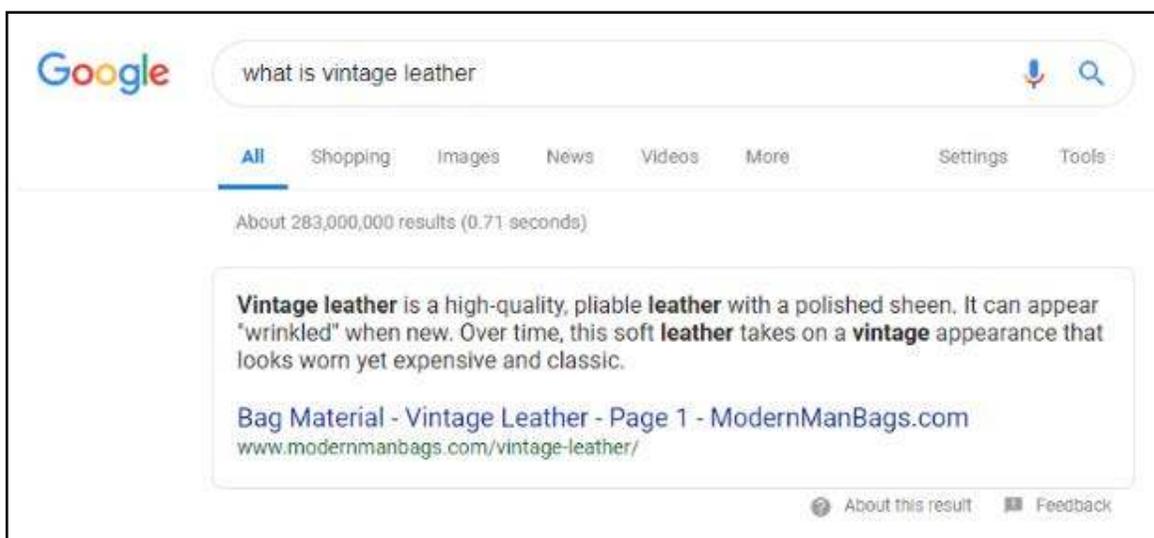
Using Product & Category Pages to Win Featured Snippets

Online retailers can also capture featured snippets with their existing pages — a relief for smaller retailers who don't have the resources to launch and maintain a blog or resource center!

Spangler, a small, family-owned candy company, was able to capture featured snippets with the content they added to the nutrition facts section of their product pages.



A small retailer specializing in men's bags was able to snag some featured snippets by including descriptive text on their product category pages.



Now that you have a better idea of what featured snippets are available to ecommerce websites, we'll walk you through how you can find those opportunities and capture some for yourself.

Your Step-By-Step Guide to Capturing Ecommerce Featured Snippets

Follow these steps to find your opportunities, optimize your pages, and capture those featured snippets!

Step 1: Keyword Research

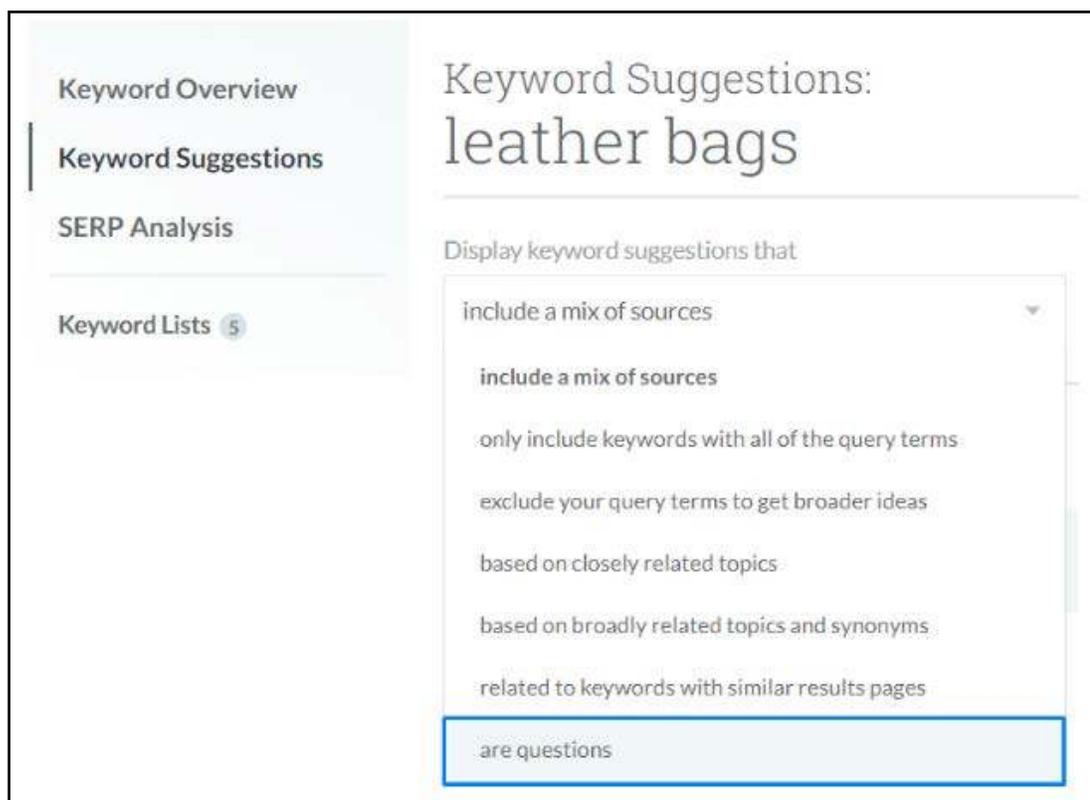
To find the questions people are asking about your products, turn to a keyword research tool like [Moz Keyword Explorer](#).

Type in a “seed keyword” (product or category name):



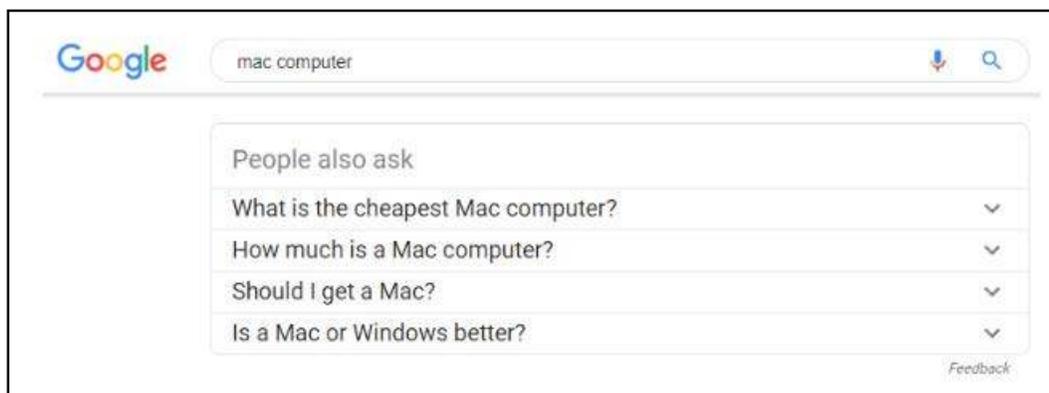
A screenshot of the Moz Keyword Explorer search interface. It features a dark teal header bar. Below it is a search input field with a light gray background. The input field contains the text "keyword" and a small downward-pointing arrow icon. To the right of the input field, the text "leather bags" is displayed. The entire search area is enclosed in a thin black border.

Navigate to Keyword Suggestions and, since many featured snippets are triggered by queries formatted as a question, select “are questions” from the dropdown:



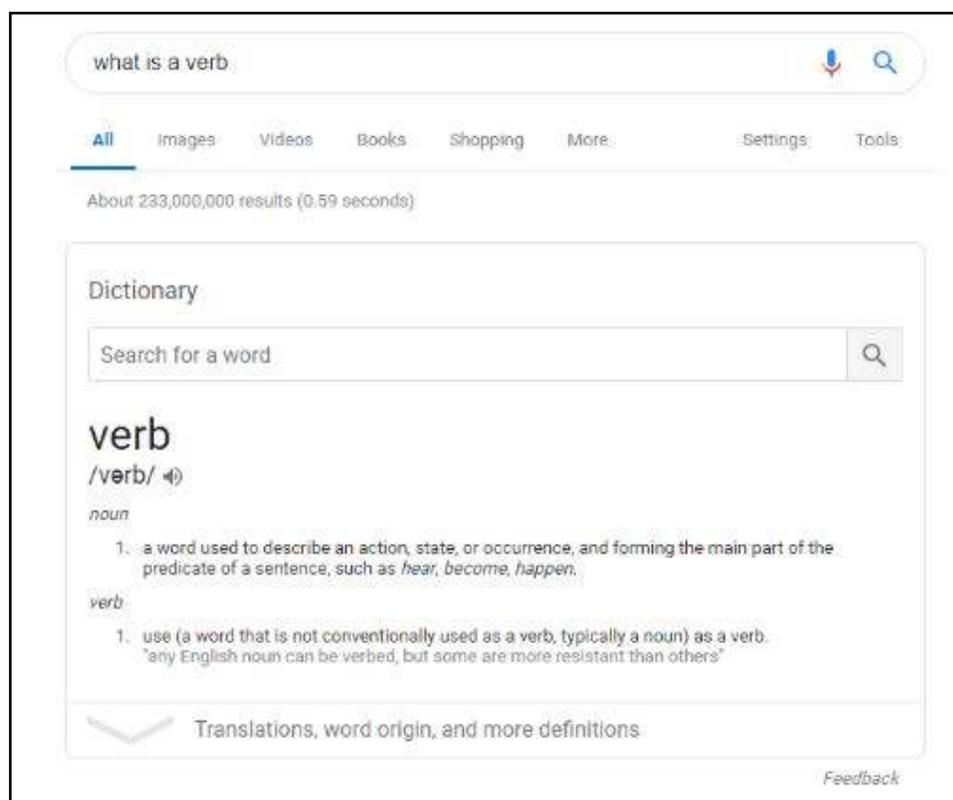
You can also learn a lot from the SERP itself!

Just search your seed keyword in Google and look for any “People also ask” (PAA) boxes for ideas of questions Google associates with your product.



When compiling your keyword list, it's best to eliminate queries that trigger an answer from Google's Knowledge Graph. These tend to be the queries with a definite answer, such as "What's 2+2?" or "What is a verb?"

Google has taken ownership of these snippets, meaning they're closed off to other websites.



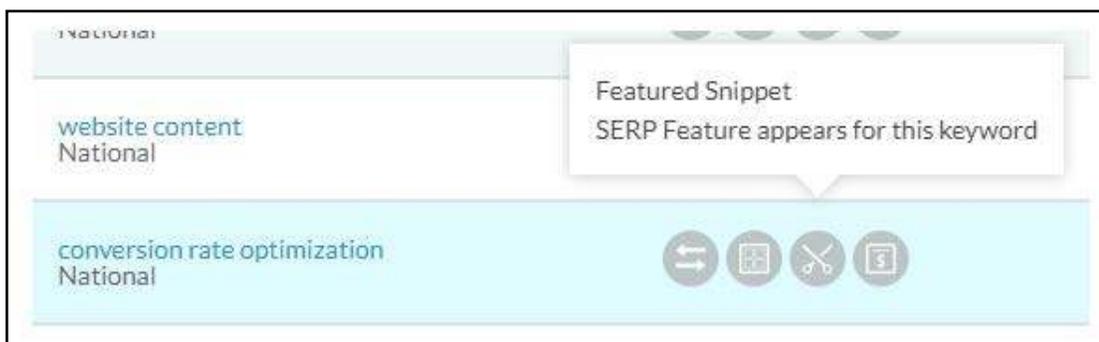
It's also a good idea to eliminate keywords that indicate an intent that doesn't match. If you sell leather bags, for example, it's probably best to avoid targeting featured snippets for "how to make your own leather bag."

Step 2: Filter Keywords by Those That Trigger an Answer Box

Not every long-tail keyword you find during your keyword research phase is going to trigger a featured snippet, so it's best to focus your attention on the keywords that do trigger an answer box.

You can find these opportunities by manually searching for the keywords in your list, which would take a considerable amount of time depending on list size, or you could use a tool like the "SERP Features" report in Moz Pro Campaigns.

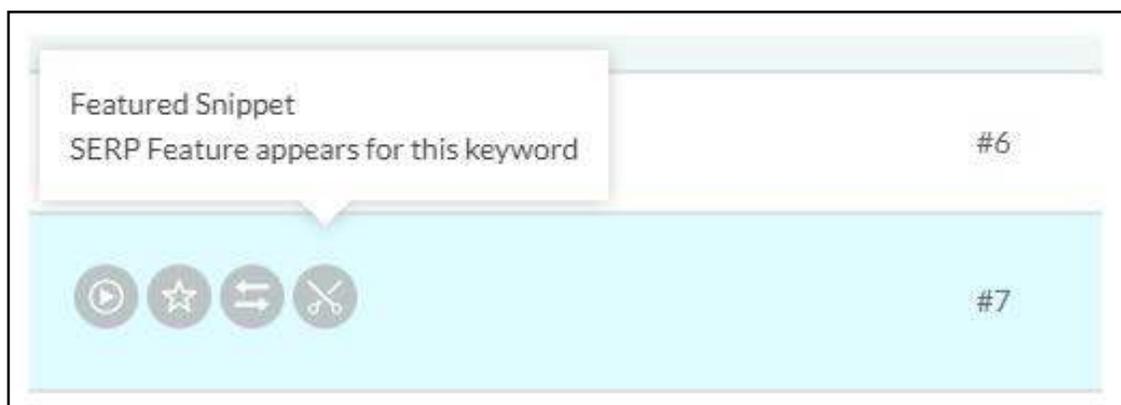
From your list of tracked keywords, you can see which trigger a featured snippet:



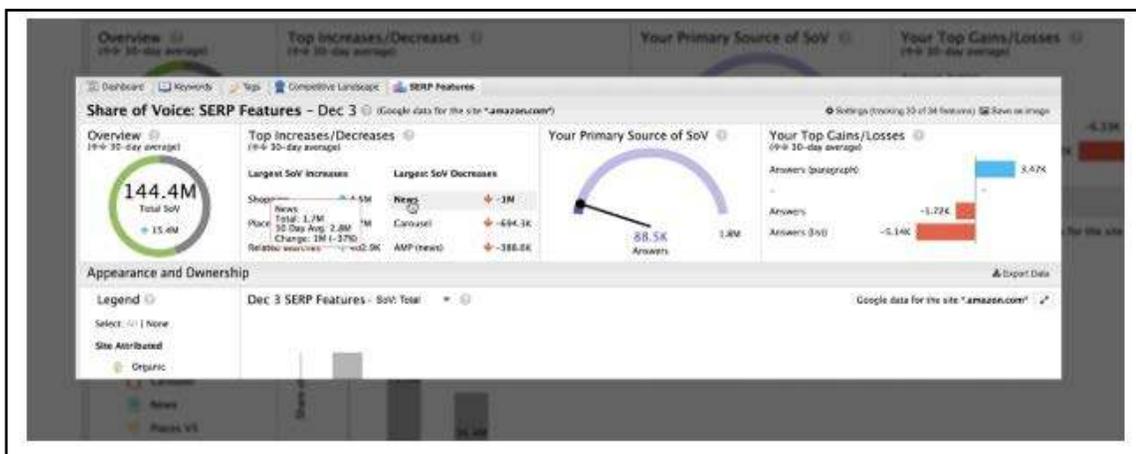
Step 3: Compare Against Your Current Rankings

While not entirely necessary, prioritizing keywords your site is already ranking for can help you capture featured snippets more quickly than optimizing for queries you're not ranking for. In other words, it'd be easier for your #4 ranked page to steal the answer box than your #50 ranked page.

You can use the same report in Moz Pro Campaigns to see which of your ranking keywords return SERPs with a featured snippet.



STAT is also a great resource for viewing owned versus unowned featured snippets, especially for enterprise sites with a high volume of keywords to track and target. At a quick glance, you can see what the current (and historical) SERP looks like and see your top gains and losses. There's even a dashboard that **shows you which keywords are already triggering featured snippets.**



At this point, you should be left with a list of keywords that:

- Are questions related to your products.
- Indicate a relevant intent.
- Trigger a featured snippet.
- You're already ranking on page 1 for.

With this list of highly relevant featured snippet opportunities, it's time to move onto the final step: optimizing your content.

Step 4: Optimize Your Content

While there's no secret formula that will guarantee you'll get featured in an answer box, the following methods can increase your chances:

- **Write out the question:** If you're targeting the featured snippet for "What type of makeup is best for dry skin?" try including that question as-is on your page.
- **Follow it up immediately with a concise answer:** Going with the same example, follow up that question with "The best type of makeup for dry skin is..." Even if you don't follow this format exactly, make sure to write the following paragraph in simple, clear terms that a reader can quickly digest.
- **Match the layout of the existing featured page:** Since you're targeting keywords that already trigger a featured snippet, check out the page that's currently featured. Does it format using bullets or tables? Is it short or long? This will give you a good idea of how to format your content to qualify for the snippet.
- **Leave searchers wanting more:** Encourage searchers to click on your featured snippet by giving them some of the information, but not everything. For example, if the existing featured snippet shows five bulleted steps, try titling your

article “seven steps” so the reader will want to click to see the remaining two.

• **Double check your on-page SEO:** Simple yet often overlooked, the quality of your on-page SEO can really make a difference. Google is all about the searcher experience, so they want to show pages with quality content, links that work, load fast, etc.

Looking for more?

Moz's Britney Muller did a three-part Whiteboard Friday series on discovering, targeting, and monitoring featured snippets. Check it out!

1. [How to Discover Featured Snippet Opportunities](#)
2. [How to Target Featured Snippet Opportunities](#)
3. [How to Monitor Featured Snippet Opportunities](#)

Putting It All Into Practice

Now it's your turn! Experience is the best teacher, so we encourage you to start hunting for ecommerce featured snippet opportunities today.

With these coveted "position 0" rankings, you'll not only increase brand and product awareness, but also your bottom line.



An Introduction to Google Shopping

Sponsored By  WordStream



When a Google user searches for a product, he or she is served Shopping ads.

On desktop, they're shown in a grid format on the right side of the SERP.

The screenshot shows a Google search for "coffee mugs". The search bar at the top contains "coffee mugs" and shows "About 173,000,000 results (0:49 seconds)". Below the search bar are navigation tabs for "All", "Shopping", "Images", "Maps", "News", "More", "Settings", and "Tools".

On the left side of the page, there are several organic search results:

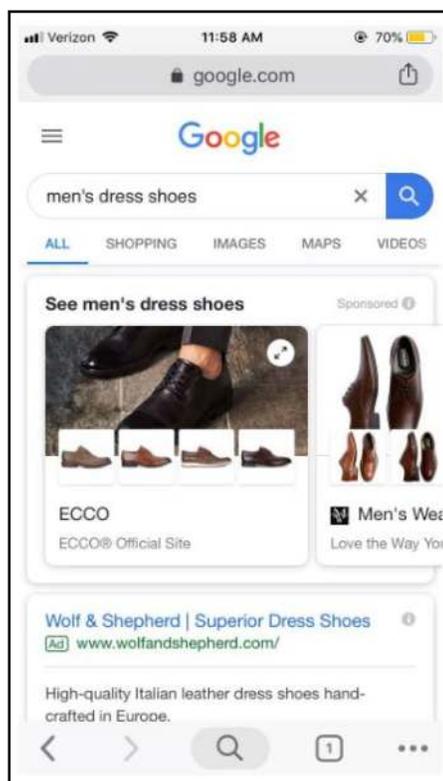
- Custom Mugs Ready w/in 24 Hrs. | We Make Ordering Easy.** (www.4imprint.com) - Last-minute promotions are no challenge when using 24 hr VIP service!
- Coffee Mugs - Low as 62¢ | Low as 62¢ - Free Shipping** (www.discountmugs.com) - Trusted Service, Lowest Prices, Same Quality, and Quick Turnaround.
- Make Your Own Mugs Online | No Minimum Order Quantity** (www.vistaprint.com) - High Quality Mugs. Great For Gifts!
- 65¢ Coffee Mugs | Dishwasher Safe - Free Proof | BargainMugs.com** (www.bargainmugs.com) - Rating for bargainmugs.com: 4.7 - 223 reviews.
- Amazon.com: Coffee Mugs: Home & Kitchen** (https://www.amazon.com/Novelty-Coffee-Mugs/...) - Factory Direct Logo / Blank Mugs. Free Rush.

On the right side of the page, there is a "See coffee mugs" section with a "Sponsored" label. A red arrow points to this section. It displays a grid of six Shopping ads:

- 36 Wholesale Hilo Bistro Mug...** (Amsterdam Print) - \$129.24
- Coffee Mugs - Traditional...** (DiscountMugs.c...) - \$0.61 (218 reviews)
- 72 Promotional Coffee Mugs (...)** (4imprint) - \$281.20 (142 reviews)
- 24 Custom Promotional...** (Amsterdam Print) - \$191.52
- Uline Ripple Insulated Cups...** (ULINE) - \$69.00
- Promotional Aztec Spooner...** (Quality Logo Pro...) - \$0.01 (5 reviews)

And on mobile, they're shown in a carousel format at the top of the SERP.

According to Merkle, Shopping ads account for roughly **75%** of clicks from non-branded product searches. All queries considered—branded and non-branded—Shopping ads drive around 60% of ecommerce advertisers' clicks.



Elsewhere, Adthema reports that American ecommerce vendors who advertise on Google drive **85%** of their paid clicks from Shopping ads.

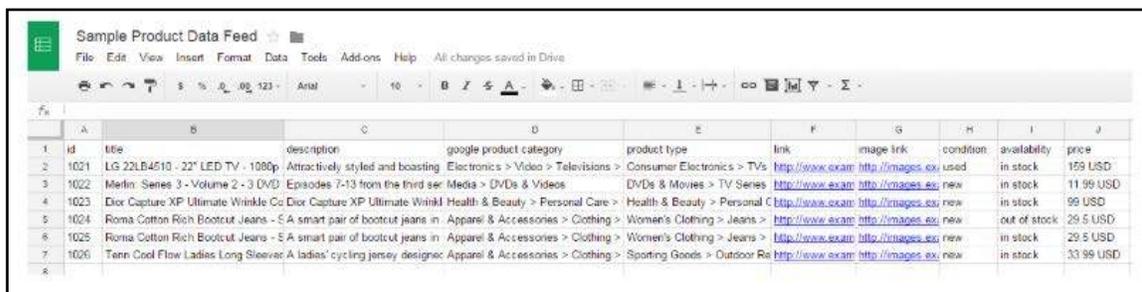
Translation: failing to leverage Google Shopping is a mistake.

How Does Google Shopping Work?

Short answer: a whole lot differently than does the rest of Google Ads.

To become a Shopping advertiser, you have to link your Google Ads account to Google Merchant Center. Don't worry – it's a super simple process. You can take care of it [here](#).

Once that's settled, it's time to set up your product data feed – a spreadsheet that describes and organizes every product in your catalog in such a way that Google can easily crawl it and index the information it needs.



	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J
1	id	title	description	google product category	product type	link	image link	condition	availability	price
2	1021	LG 22LB4510 - 22" LED TV - 1080p	Attractively styled and boasting	Electronics > Video > Televisions >	Consumer Electronics > TVs	http://www.exam.com	http://images.ex.com	used	in stock	159 USD
3	1022	Merlin Series 3 - Volume 2 - 3 DVD	Episodes 7-13 from the third ser	Media > DVDs & Videos	DVDs & Movies > TV Series	http://www.exam.com	http://images.ex.com	new	in stock	11.99 USD
4	1023	Dior Capture XP Ultimate Winkie Co Dior Capture XP Ultimate Winkie		Health & Beauty > Personal Care >	Health & Beauty > Personal C	http://www.exam.com	http://images.ex.com	new	in stock	99 USD
5	1024	Roma Cotton Rich Bootcut Jeans - S A smart pair of bootcut jeans in		Apparel & Accessories > Clothing >	Women's Clothing > Jeans >	http://www.exam.com	http://images.ex.com	new	out of stock	29.5 USD
6	1025	Roma Cotton Rich Bootcut Jeans - S A smart pair of bootcut jeans in		Apparel & Accessories > Clothing >	Women's Clothing > Jeans >	http://www.exam.com	http://images.ex.com	new	in stock	29.5 USD
7	1026	Tenn Cool Flow Ladies Long Sleeve A ladies' cycling jersey designe		Apparel & Accessories > Clothing >	Sporting Goods > Outdoor Re	http://www.exam.com	http://images.ex.com	new	in stock	33.99 USD
8										

Advertisers with small product catalogs can probably create their own feeds. Larger advertisers (those who sell hundreds or thousands of products) will need to leverage an automated feed solution like [GoDataFeed](#).

When creating your feed, you'll have to provide the following information for each product in your catalog:

- ID
- Title
- Description
- Link
- Image link
- Availability
- Price
- Category
- Brand
- GTIN
- MPN
- Condition
- Item group ID

There's a reason Google requires so much information: Shopping advertisers don't create their own ads. Instead, Google indexes your product data and uses it to create a digital profile for your store. (It does this for every other Shopping advertiser, too, of course.)

That way, when a user searches for a product, Google has the information it needs to automatically generate the most relevant Shopping ads.

Shopping advertisers don't bid on keywords, either. Rather, as is the case with SEO, you target keywords in your product titles and product descriptions. By doing this – and by providing other required pieces of information, like product category and GTIN – you tell Google everything it needs to know to optimally populate the search results.



At this point, you're probably wondering how Google knows the price to charge you for each click. We'll get there.

How Do I Structure Google Shopping Campaigns?

Google Merchant Center set-up – check. Product data feed creation – check.

Now, it's time to head back into the Google Ads UI and create some Shopping campaigns.

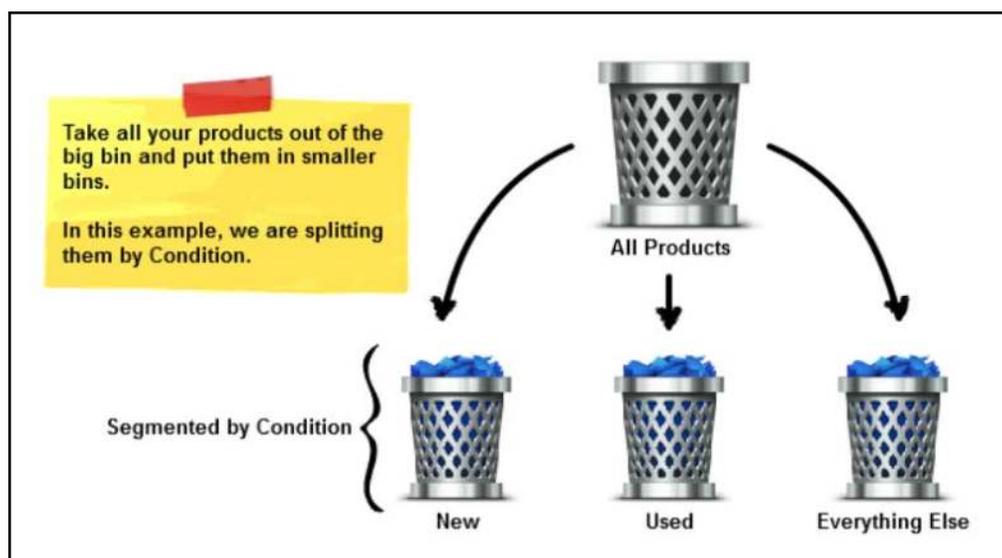
At the outset of the campaign, Google will put all of your products into a single product group named All Products. From there, you have the freedom to break that general product group down into as many different product groups as you please.

Make sure to be thoughtful about this. Shopping bids are set on product groups.

Across your catalog, different products have different prices, different profit margins, and different conversion rates. If you put products that vary widely across those three metrics in the same product group, they'll all be given the same maximum CPC bid.

You don't want that. Generally speaking, the more expensive, profitable, or well-converting a product is, the more you'll want to bid on it.

The only way to eliminate any and all variation between products within a single product group is to give each individual product its own product group. In fact, we recommend this tactic for ecommerce advertisers with small catalog. For those who sell several hundred or several thousand products, however, that's simply not an option.



Instead, you should try to create product groups that contain as little variation as possible. For two different businesses, that's going to result in substantially different campaign structures.

Let's say you're a reseller who advertises athletic apparel. To begin, you break your All Products group into two separate product groups according to gender: men's and women's. Then, you break each of those according to category: tops, bottoms, and sneakers.

Each tops group breaks into short sleeve and long sleeve. Each bottoms group breaks into shorts and pants. Each sneakers group breaks into low-cut and high-top. Finally, each of those groups breaks according to brand: Nike, Under Armour, and Puma.

So, that leaves you with 36 distinct product groups. Here are three examples:

- Men's Nike low-cut sneakers
- Women's Under Armour long sleeve shirts
- Men's Puma shorts

These are the product groups to which you assign maximum CPC bids. As you can see, although you sell too many products to give each its own product group (and bid), your product

groups are granular enough for you to feel confident that you're not bidding the same amount of money on substantially different products.

Now that you've built your product groups and assigned each of them a bid, Google knows how much you're willing to pay for a single click on each individual product advertisement.

As is the case with the Google Search auction, where your Shopping ad lands in the sponsored search results for a given query partially depends on how much you're willing to pay for a click. The more you're willing to pay, the higher you can expect to rank.

The other factor is Quality Score. Each time Google generates an ad for one of your products, it assigns the ad a Quality Score.

Here are a few things you can do to improve Quality Score:

- **Provide as much product information as possible.** The more information you provide, the more precisely Google can match your ad to search queries. The more precisely Google can match your ad to search queries, the more relevant it will be.

- **Create a well-targeted title and description.** This will make the copy Google generates more enticing to searchers. Good copy yields a good click-through rate (CTR), and a good CTR improves Quality Score.
- **Make your landing page experience seamless.** The more easily users can navigate your landing page, the higher priority Google will give your Shopping ad.

How Do I Optimize My Google Shopping Bids?

As we mentioned in the last section, there are three key factors you should consider when setting your bids: price, profit margin, and conversion rate.

“But I’m just starting out with Google Shopping. I don’t know how well my products convert.”

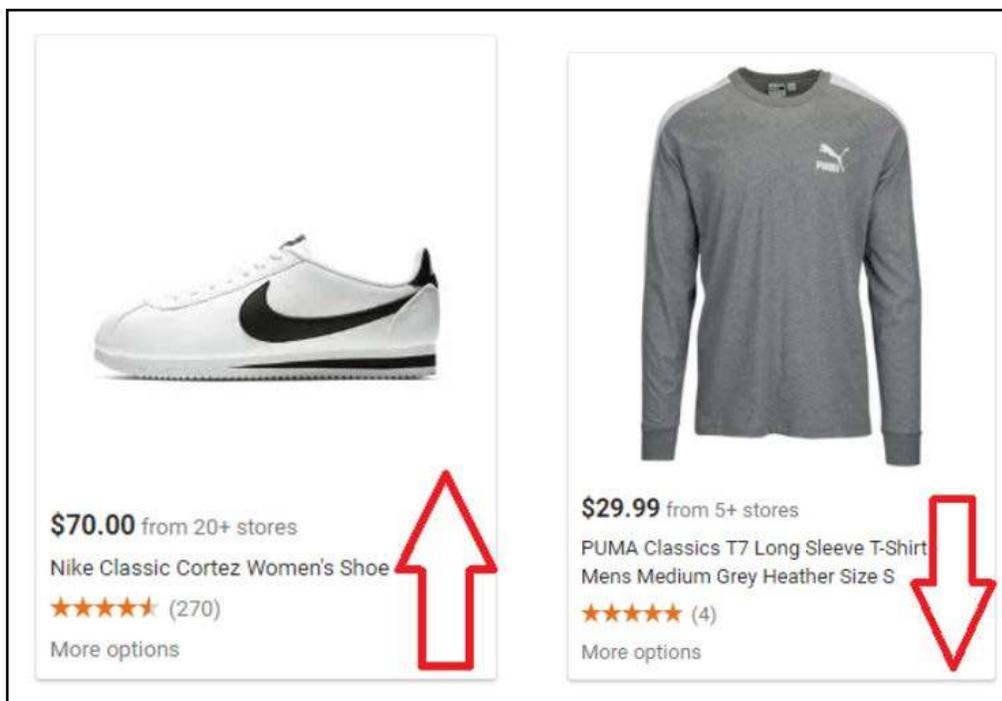
Thank you, reader, for the perfect segue into our first bidding optimization tip.

Start Low

It’s a good idea to bid below your budget when you’re getting started. That way, as the weeks go on, you accumulate data and get a better idea of how well particular products sell.

For example, let’s say you allocate modest bids across your athletic apparel Shopping campaign. After two months, you feel confident that women’s Nike low-cut sneakers are your best sellers. At the other end of the spectrum, men’s Puma long sleeve shirts aren’t doing too well.

So you bid up on the former group and bid down on the latter group.



If you regularly conduct this practice throughout your campaign – noting which product groups could use some more spend and which could use some less – you'll be in good shape.

Use Geographic Bid Modifiers

It's likely that your products will sell better in some regions than they do in others. Once you've collected enough data to have a legitimate idea of which regions you want to focus on, use bid modifiers to increase your maximum CPCs whenever people in those regions search queries that you're targeting.

That way, you give yourself a better chance of earning a top sponsored spot.

Pay Attention to Search Impression Share

Search Impression Share is an important metric. Quite simply, it's the quotient of the total number of impressions your Shopping ad has received divided by the total number of impressions it was eligible to receive.

$$\text{Search Impression Share} = \text{Impressions} / \text{Possible Impressions}$$

If your Search Impression Share for a product is low, that means it's ranking poorly. If you have no reason to believe that its Quality Score is low—you've provided all the information you can, its CTR is fine, and you've optimized the landing page—you may need to increase your bid.

But, what if that product is in the same group as products with low conversion rates? You don't want to bid up on those.

This is where Custom Labels come into play. With a Custom Label, you can handpick specific products from various product groups and place them in a single group, thus enabling you to assign them the same bid.

Item id	custom label 0	custom label 1	custom label 2	custom label 3	custom label 4
Item #1	Winter	BestSeller		LowMargin	
Item #2	Summer			HighMargin	2013
Item #3			Clearance		2012

Via [PPC Professionals](#).

For example, you may find that your ten best-selling products are scattered across eight different product groups. You can use a Custom Label to group all ten together and assign a unique, relatively high bid.

Consider Automated Bidding Strategies

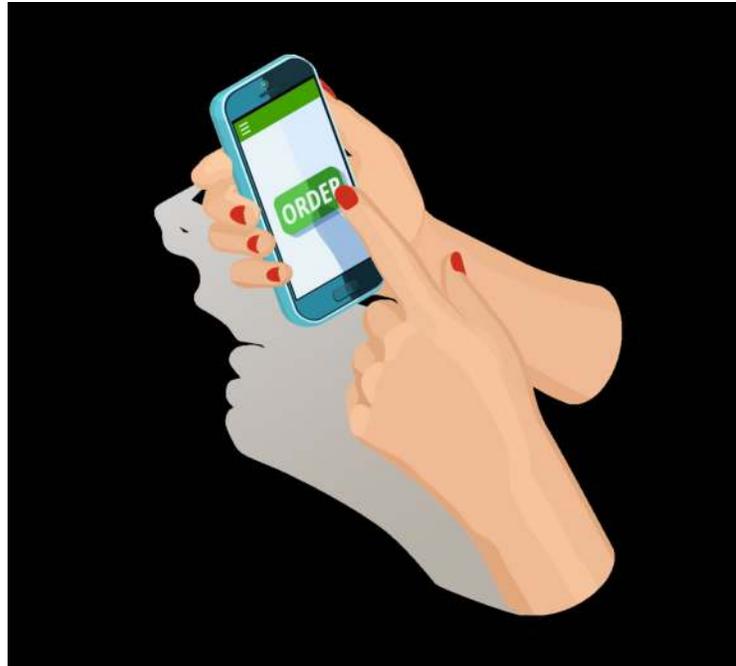
We'll wrap up this introduction to Google Shopping with a few words on automated bidding strategies.

Created for those who don't have the time or the capacity to manually manage their Shopping bids, automated bid strategies use machine learning to monitor your campaign performance and set bids according to your business goals.

If you want to boost site visits, **Maximize Clicks** sets bids with the intent to drive as many clicks as possible within the constraints of your daily budget.

If you want to maintain manual control of your bids and increase conversions, **Enhanced CPC** automatically increases or decreases the bids you set according to the likelihood of each click becoming a conversion.

And, finally, if you want to maximize your conversion value while simultaneously achieving a certain level of ROAS, **Target ROAS** sets your bids accordingly.



Advanced PPC Strategies for Your Ecommerce Site

By:  Aaron Levy  Courtney O'Donnell



Ecommerce is one of the most challenging and competitive verticals in SEM.

No matter what industry you're in, you're undoubtedly competing against behemoths like Amazon/Walmart with a constant fear of scrappy niche startups nipping at your heels.

As more and more dollars **shift towards Shopping ads** and the competition continues to climb, retailers need to adopt more advanced strategies in order to stay ahead.

Implement Shopping Brand & Non-Brand Keyword Segmentation

Keyword-based text ads allow retailers to easily understand a consumer's window of intent and are able to optimize accordingly. However, shopping ads were created on a product-based bidding model which means Google's auction selects what products show up for a specific search result.

This model takes away an important aspect of optimization and bid control because retailers are not able to bid differently on a consumer throughout their purchase journey.

While this can be disheartening it doesn't have to be! There is a solution to the product bidding disadvantage, and that's keyword segmentation. Through the shopping setting, campaign priority, you are able to control how much you bid for different types of queries.

How do campaign priorities work? When you have the same product in multiple shopping campaigns, you can determine which campaign should participate in the auction for that product with the campaign priority – high, medium or low. The highest priority campaign will always enter the auction first, regardless of how much you are bidding.

To create a shopping keyword segmentation structure retailers must start by building three campaigns of the same product, or group of products, each with a different priority setting – high, medium, and low. The priority settings will act as a funnel, filtering down more specific keywords via negatives.

Below is a table to highlight how the shopping keyword segmentation structure works.

Campaign Name	Search Terms	Campaign Priorities	Negative Keywords	Bid
Non-Brand	Non-brand queries	High	Brand queries	Medium
Catch All	Inefficient non-brand queries	Medium	Brand queries	Low
Brand	Brand queries	Low		High

Shopping keyword segmentation gives advertisers the ability to own the SERP on branded terms, to optimize bids based on non-brand performance, and to control what products to advertise at different stages of the purchase journey.

Shopping keyword segmentation is a worthwhile approach to ensure you are driving sales on high intent queries and cutting spend on inefficient head terms.

Dynamic Search Ads Are an Asset, Not an Accessory

Leverage the power of Dynamic Search Ads to expand your keyword set at a lower cost.

When crafting campaigns for ecommerce, you'll often find that the most logical keywords are also the most expensive and least profitable.

There's an old adage that around 15 percent of daily searches are not new to Google; sure you'll find them via broad match with a higher CPC, but it's more efficient to let DSA do the dirty work for you.

When crafting a DSA campaign, there are a few things you need to keep in mind:

- **Pages and URLs are your keywords.** Make sure to segment like-sections of the site into their own ad groups to maximize copy relevancy.
- **By the same token, use negatives! Block DSA's from going to irrelevant pages.** I doubt there would be any relevant queries coming from pages around careers or return policy.

- **Leverage a full suite of extensions, just like you would for a keyword targeting campaign.** They'll likely see less volume due to lower ad rank, but better to have them present.
- **Use any and all audiences available.** Spend the majority of your time optimizing towards people, and let the engines pick the keywords.
- **Smart bidding features** (target ROAS/CPA and eCPC) help amplify the effectiveness and efficiency of DSA's. Use them often.

It's a common practice to take all converting keywords from a DSA campaign and deploy them into a traditional keyword-targeted campaign to maintain control.

While this is an effective way to ensure maximum volume, oftentimes CPCs spike to the point of being inefficient when targeting every query instead of when DSAs determine its most likely to convert.

Unless a single query is getting dominant volume or underperforming relative to keyword targeting, it's recommended to leave them be.

Adopt Google Showcase Shopping Ads

In 2016, Google launched a new ad format – Showcase Shopping ads. This solution looks to better position ecommerce, retail and fashion advertisers with their customers.

Think of Google Showcase Shopping ads as your digital storefront. It's the window shopping solution your online customers are looking for.

You're able to group together different ecommerce, fashion and retail products using vivid, high-quality digital images. You can complement existing products with multiple smaller products, or combine several "me-too" products within a larger discounted offer.

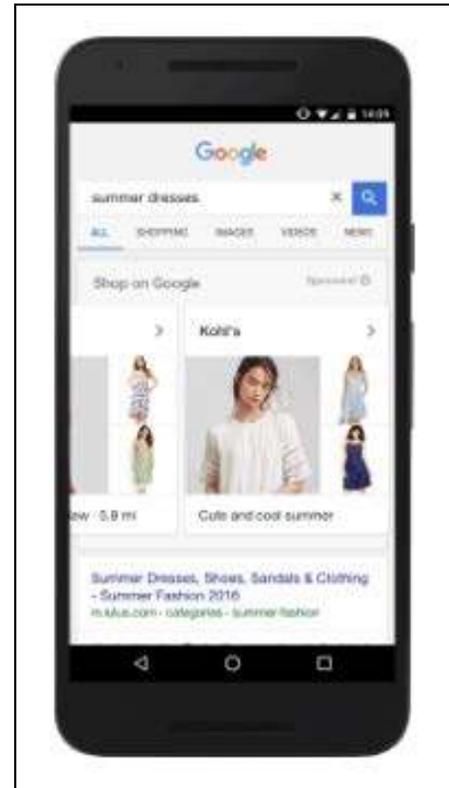
Showcase ads are used to target more generic non-brand queries and appear on mobile search results. On the SERP, the ad features a brand-specific, customized hero image relating to the search query along with two smaller images.

These smaller images show the actual products. When the user clicks into the ad it features the custom hero image, a custom description to help introduce the brand and up to ten individual products.

Aside from the visual differences, Showcase Shopping ads use maximum CPE (cost per engagement) bidding, which means that advertisers set the highest amount that they are willing to pay for an engagement.

They then are charged when someone expands the ad and spends ten or more seconds within the ad or when a user clicks on a link to the site before the ten seconds.

Showcase ads continue to gain mobile click share. This ad format is a great branding tool, tailored towards user engagement rather than user acquisition and best used as an upper-funnel tactic.



Connect Online to Offline with Local Inventory Ads

According to Google, almost 80 percent of shoppers will go in-store when the retailer has an item they want immediately. One of the best ways to address this expectation of immediate in-store availability is through local inventory ads.

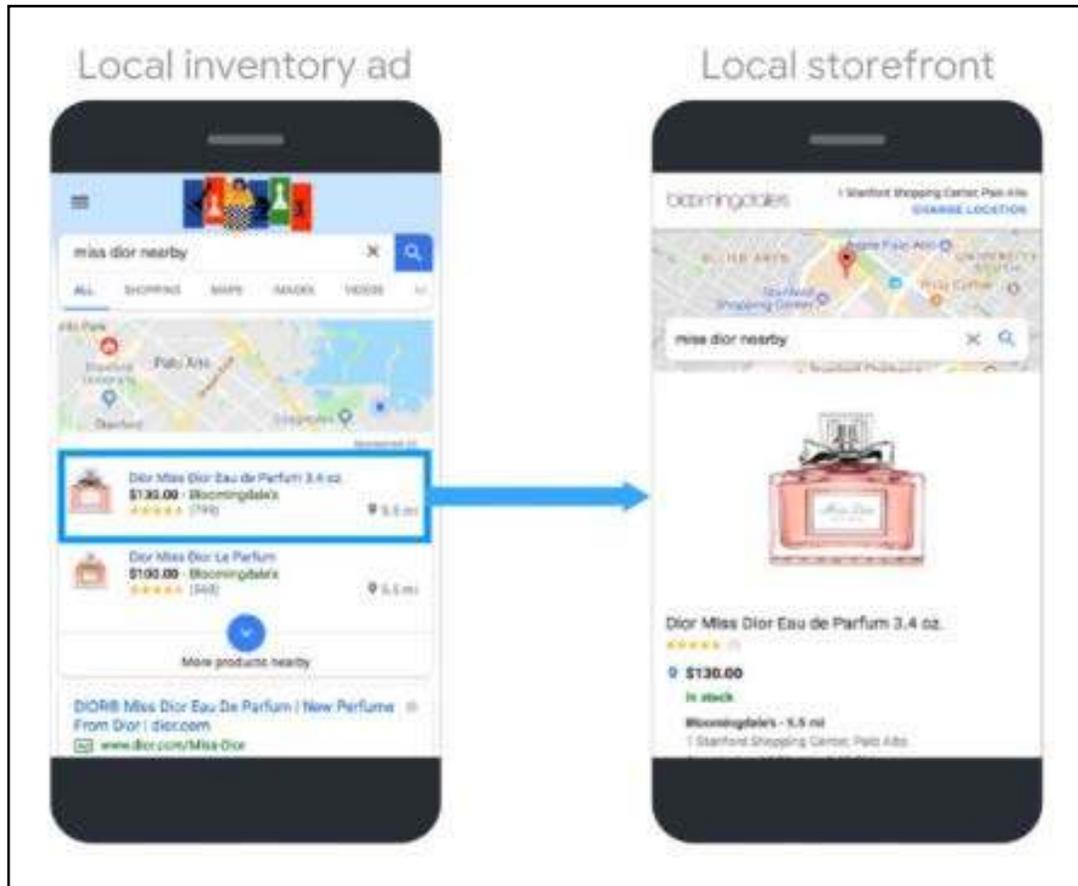
This ad format is a great way to drive customers to your store, capturing their attention by highlighting products available at stores nearby.

Local inventory ads appear on mobile queries that include local intent (for example, “dresses near me”) and will trigger if the user is within 35 miles of a store. When users click on your ad, they’re immediately directed to your Google-hosted local storefront page.

Your customized storefront page includes:

- A product description.
- An image of the product.
- Links to your website.
- Your phone number.
- Your store’s hours of operation.
- A map providing directions to your store.

Customers can also buy directly by clicking through to your website.



While local inventory ads are a great option for all brick-and-mortar advertisers, the setup and maintenance can prove challenging. Advertisers must ensure in-store availability and inventory counts in the feed are updated daily.

In an attempt to alleviate the onboarding and maintenance of local feeds, Google launched a local feed partnership program. This new program allows third-party inventory data providers to provide sale and inventory data to Google on behalf of the merchant.

Once an advertiser launches local inventory campaigns the recommended way to measure impact is through multiple sources, like Google Ads and Google Analytics.

Monitoring key metrics like in-store traffic and online orders, as well as other analytics, allow retailers to optimize campaigns toward in-store visits and resulting offline and online sales.

Target the Less Obvious Audience

Audience tools like demographics, customer match and retargeting are some of the more powerful features Google and Bing have created in recent memory.

Advertisers have the ability to customize messaging, increase/decrease bids and generally pinpoint whatever or whomever you want!

Some of the most commonly used (and recommended) audiences are in-market, meaning Google is able to hone in on people who are actively researching to make a significant purchase.

If you're an insurance company, it seems like a no brainer to add an audience of users who are in market for insurance, right? The challenge is all of your competitors are doing the same thing.

Consider using audiences as a way to find what else your audience likes and target accordingly.

If you're selling handbags or jewelry, you might find success targeting men who want to buy something for their significant other's birthday or anniversary.

Boutique fitness club? Try targeting users interested in organic food.

Google has a bevy of tools to help identify these cohorts as well. Head over to the Audience Insights section of the audience manager to get a view of what your audience likes relative to the rest of the country.

Below is a snapshot from a luxury watch seller. Perhaps it shouldn't be too surprising the audience indexes high for Pools, Sailing, and Trips to Miami!

<input type="checkbox"/>	In-market audience	Index
<input type="checkbox"/>	Apparel & Accessories Men's Apparel	9.4x
<input type="checkbox"/>	Apparel & Accessories > Jewelry & Watches Watches	8.9x
<input type="checkbox"/>	Business Services Payment Processing & Merchant Services	8.6x
<input type="checkbox"/>	Travel > Trips by Destination > Trips to North America > Trips to the US Trips to Florida	8.1x
<input type="checkbox"/>	Affinity audience	Index
<input type="checkbox"/>	Travel > Travel Buffs Luxury Travelers	6.5x
<input type="checkbox"/>	Sports & Fitness > Sports Fans Boating & Sailing Enthusiasts	4.8x
<input type="checkbox"/>	News & Politics > Avid News Readers Avid World News Readers	4x
<input type="checkbox"/>	Vehicles & Transportation > Auto Enthusiasts Performance & Luxury Vehicle Enthusiasts	4x

Re-Evaluate Your KPIs

Return on Ad Spend (ROAS as we all affectionately call it) can be a dangerous metric. It's a single snapshot in time, evaluating only whether a single order made money or not.

Optimizing to single-purchase ROAS only will diminish the ability to compete in challenging auctions. Consider evaluating towards Cost Per Acquired Customer, Customer Lifetime Value or one-year customer payback as a better true north metric.

For true, top-of-the-funnel prospecting search terms, consider targeting micro-conversions or "steps" as a way to add value without breaking the bank. Optimize towards an email list subscribe, or use early-stage terms as a way to build retargeting pools to market to later.



4 Effective Ecommerce Link Building Strategies

By:  Kevin Rowe



As an ecommerce site, the goal is to drive links and traffic to your product pages, as those are the final step before a customer clicks “add to cart” and completes a purchase.

But creating valuable content and **utilizing other link building strategies** can also help you convert users into customers.

Offering high-quality content to your audience and working closely with partners to share your products on blogs or online publications can help drive more sales with a long-term strategy.

The most successful ecommerce sites today aren't simply pushing out messaging that says "buy my product." They are publishing content that says, "come learn about my product and what it does so you can make an educated purchasing decision with someone reputable, like me."

Today's customers are looking for education and more information before they make a decision. If you prioritize content creation and link building efforts to become that information resource, you will likely be rewarded with more links and better conversions.

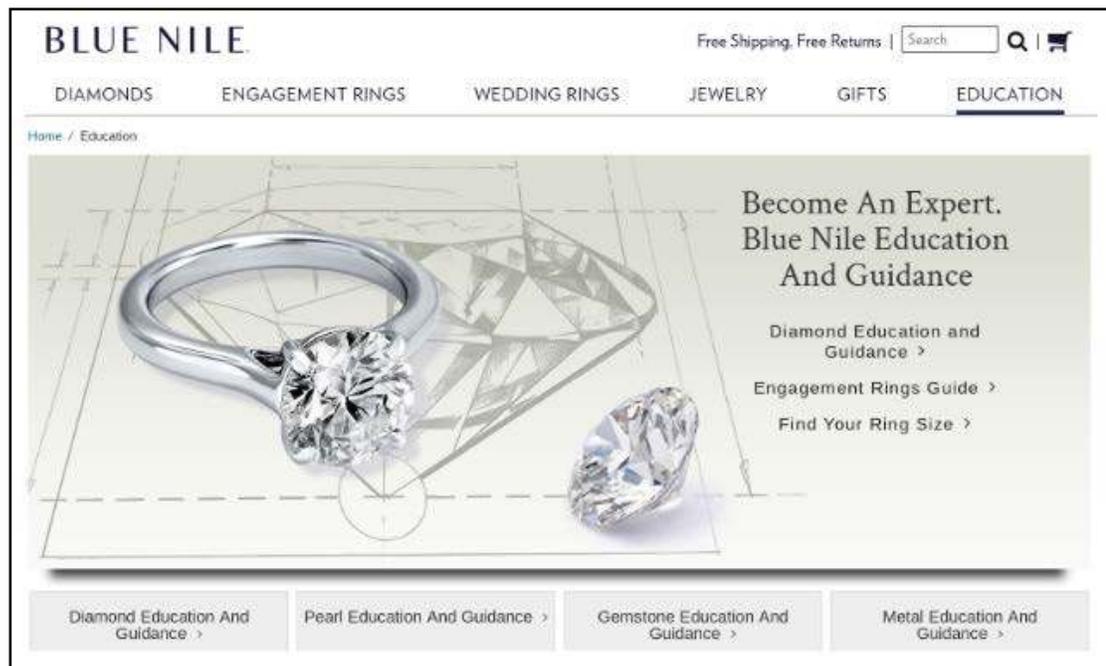
Below are some of the ways to build worthwhile links through being a resource and trusted partner.

1. Offer an Education Section

People like seeing additional information on what they are looking for. The internet has enabled us to become detailed researchers when it comes to making purchasing decisions. Offering advanced resources or an education guide on what you offer can be a big benefit.

Take, for instance, [this](#) educational section from online jewelry store Blue Nile. Their “diamond education and guidance” section explains the different cuts and clarity levels of diamonds and other gemstones, which can help their customers understand justify the varying prices of jewelry.

Not only is this a valuable resource for external websites to link to (like wedding or fashion blogs), having educated customers in a high-value market may convince them to buy at a higher price point.



Other formats of research sections do extremely well for websites or publications that are facilitating their own research.

For instance, Stone Temple Consulting has an “Insights” section on their website that includes all their proprietary research on voice search, featured snippets, and more.

Not only are they providing a worthwhile resource to link to, but they are also setting themselves up as credible thought leaders in their industry.



Think about it: if you were a provider going to buy any service, whether it's digital marketing services or jewelry, which is more reputable? A website without an education section or one with it?

Customers are extremely likely to research a product online before they buy it both online or in-store. According to Bazaarvoice, **82 percent** of shoppers research on their phone before making a purchase and 45 percent read reviews.

2. Get Featured in Resource Sections

Another helpful section of many websites for users is the Resources section, where websites list trusted providers that offer tangential services.

For instance, a Crossfit box (Crossfit gyms are called boxes) would likely link out to fitness-related resources, like Reebok's Crossfit product line, an ecommerce store that sold weightlifting gloves, and a local massage therapist for soothing sore or tight muscles from workouts.

Getting a link to your education guides or products on other websites is a great way to build useful links. Start by researching using Google or a content research tool like Clearscope or BuzzSumo (no affiliation). Search for industry keywords + a word like "Resources" or "related products."

Using our Crossfit example, [here's a box in California with a resources page:](#)

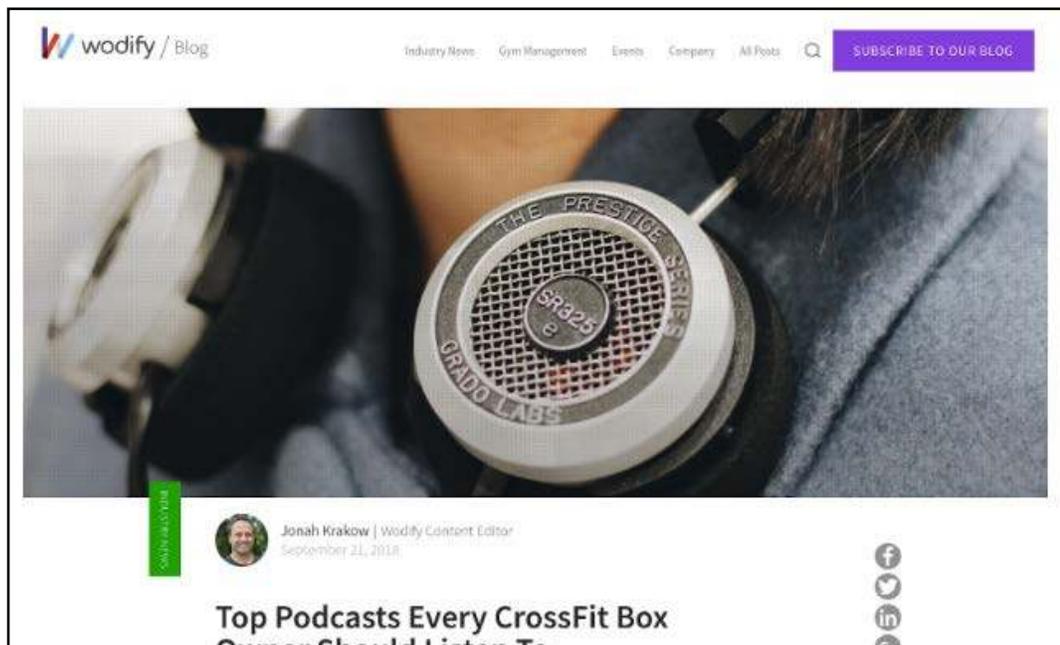


After finding a website like this that is high quality, you can email them to offer your products as a resource to include. You can use a template, but it's highly recommended that each email is as customized as possible for a more personal touch.

Mentioning something you like about their website or offerings is a good way to break the ice. Just keep it genuine. Spending the time to make this unique is worth the effort and much more likely to result in a link.

Besides offering your products as a recommended resource, if you have useful content you can recommend, try that approach as well.

Let's say we launched a Crossfit podcast. We can search for "crossfit podcast" and find round-up lists other blogs have **created of available podcasts.** From there, we can email the creators asking for inclusion on their list.



If you have useful content, many websites or blogs will be happy to include you. Just make sure you explain why it's useful to their audience and keep your recommended content or product as specific as possible to theirs.

3. Offer Coupon Codes

Everyone likes a good deal, so use coupon codes as a strategic part of your marketing. Just don't mark it an integral part of your offering, or else sales may become dependent on customers who won't buy unless there's a discount.

Shopify [recommends](#) using coupon codes for seasonal holidays (like Valentine's Day), customer appreciation (like your annual anniversary of being in business or the customer's birthday), and to build new customer loyalty.

Experiment with the types of discounts offered to see what gets the most conversions. For instance, a \$500 discount on a computer "seems" bigger than a 25 percent discount, even though they are the same for a \$2000 computer, [cites](#) marketing professor and author Dr. Jonah Berger. A/B test your types of discounts to know what is more appealing to your specific audience.

Coupon Codes + Affiliates

A women's clothing boutique, [Cents of Style](#), offers unique discount coupon codes and landing pages to its affiliates, who then add UTM codes to the end to get affiliate credit.

Not only do unique codes allow them to track the success of their affiliate program, but it also gives the affiliates incentive to share their products, because they know they are giving their users a discount, which makes them much more likely to buy.

Get started with our Two For Tuesday Deal (ACTIVE NOW!)



Buy 1 Get 1 FREE W/CODE 2FORLOVE

Buy 1 Get 1 FREE on our graphic Valentine tees and sweatshirts! These are perfect for the holiday but just as good to rock all year long! Sizes range from S-2XL.

Link: <https://www.mycentsofstyle.com/collections/2-for-tuesday>

Price: BUY 1 GET 1 FREE (tees starting under \$15.00 a piece with this deal!)

Code: 2FORLOVE

Expires: 01/18/19 at midnight

If you have an affiliate program, consider offering unique discounts to them to share with their audiences, which feel more exclusive.

If they know they are getting discounts that aren't available publicly on other platforms, they become more enticed to share. Everyone likes being in the know!

You can also send notice of available coupon codes to code websites, like RetailMeNot, Honey, and Ebates. These websites act as coupon code aggregators and many users search them first before making a purchase.

4. Give Away Free Products

Another incentivized way to get links to your website is through product giveaways. These can be contests on your own website and social media or through influencers and mommy bloggers.

Giveaways were mentioned in one of my [SEJ ThinkTank webinars](#) because they have a good success rate. It's just important to give away the right prizes (things people would actually want) and have the right content and promotional strategy behind it.

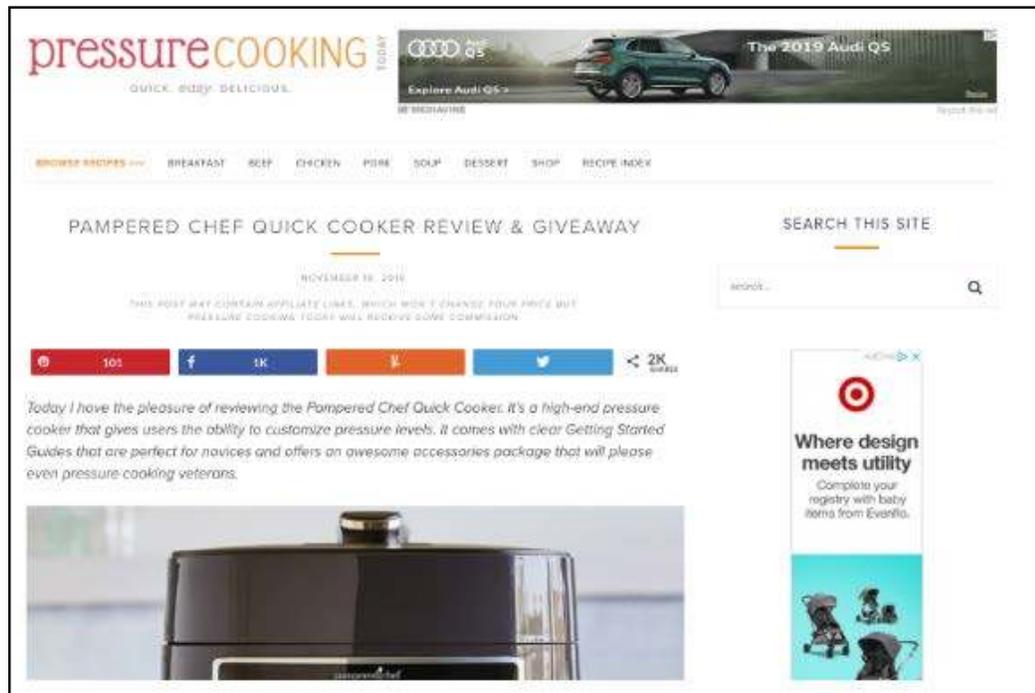
Blogger Outreach

To run a giveaway with an influencer, you can use a tool like BuzzSumo to research bloggers that get a lot of social shares. Just search for industry terms to get a list of popular articles about the topic. This can give you a jumping off point to research who you'd like to partner with.

Most bloggers and influencers have their own set of guidelines and rates for giveaways. Some charge a fee on top of the giveaway, while others will take it for free. It usually depends on their own audience size and impact. Ask for a media kit to get a bird's eye view of a blog's audience and from there, you can ask for partnership terms and rates.

Many bloggers enjoy doing giveaways because it also gives them a boost in engagement and traffic. They usually combine it with a review of the business or product so users know what to expect and are more enticed to enter to win.

Here's an example from a [pressure cooking website](#):



For any content with a blogger or influencer, make sure they use UTM links for analytics tracking and give [proper FTC disclosure](#).

By providing great value to your customers, you'll not only end up bringing in more links but more sales and loyal customers as well. Online users are always looking for the best deal or most information, so being a high-quality resource that offers affordable options for customers can help your ecommerce website grow and flourish.

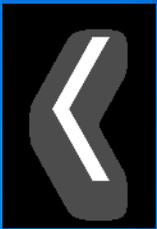


11 Social Media Marketing Strategies for Ecommerce Websites

By:



Anna Crowe



Social media is one of those things, like high waisted shorts or people still using the hashtag #nomnoms, that you either love or really hate.

But, if you're an ecommerce company, it can be kind of cringe-worthy. Between Facebook, Instagram, and new social networks like Vero and Steemit, where do you start?

As Brent Csutoras, co-owner and adviser of Search Engine Journal, **puts it,** "Businesses need to really take the time to understand their customers and how they interact with the brand on each social media site, and then engage with them in the right tone, with the right medium, and in their communities."

Need I say more? So to help get your ecommerce website one hell of a social media strategy, I've picked out 11 tips to share on 4 top social networks to drive sales.

Facebook

Tip 1: Go Live

Stop scheduling your promoted posts, put your content calendars away – Facebook is testing a new ecommerce tool for Facebook Live that allows Pages to display products in their stream.

Then, viewers can purchase through screenshots.

Jeff Higgins [saw](#) the first sighting:

Jeff Higgins (The Cool One) @ItsJeffHiggins [Follow](#)

Facebook is adding a live video mode for sellers. Viewers can message you during the broadcast with screenshots of the product and you can take payments from your inbox. Facebook is essentially giving users their own live Home Shopping Network.

ty Messages Insights

Showcase Products & Connect With Your Customers

New! Live Video Mode for Sellers
Showcase products and connect with your customers.

[Learn More](#)

Introducing a new live video mode that helps you sell more efficiently.

Viewers can now message you during the broadcast with screenshots of the products they want to buy, so you can quickly close sales by requesting payments from your inbox.

This feature is not yet available to everyone. If you're interested in trying it, join the waitlist below.

12:13 PM - 29 Nov 2018

5 Retweets 8 Likes

Think of this like a QVC or Home Shopping Network. I know, I know, just another Facebook feature. But it works.

Emily Ley sold **2.28x** more planners in May 2018 launch compared to the previous year's launch with help from Facebook Live video and ads.

Tip 2: Link to Facebook Messenger from Your Website

Facebook Messenger has **more than 1.3 billion** monthly active users.

However, it's still a huge sales channel that ecommerce brands are missing. Once you get your Facebook Messenger set up, you need to link it to your site.

Once you link it to your site, Facebook Messenger will show product updates, price changes, and give you the ability to provide customer support.

Want proof? In one day, this brand generated **254 orders and \$23,987.64 in revenue** with Facebook Messenger.

And, you better get on this soon. Facebook has a patent that allows users to **pay for products through Messenger.**

Tip 3: Invest in Facebook Ads

As the old saying goes, “you’ve got to pay to play.” And, that’s true with Facebook.

The good news is that Facebook offers a variety of ads for ecommerce websites.

For example, PupSocks spent \$1 million in 30 days to gain \$4 million in sales.

How did they do it?

They started with boosted posts then turned the top performing post into an ongoing ad campaign.

Whereas MVMT tested multiple Facebook ad formats like video and carousel to help them grow from zero to \$90 million in less than 5 years.

Instagram

Tip 4: Start Using Shoppable Posts

It may still be the reign of Facebook (pause for a united ughhh), but I'm detecting the rise of Instagram. Enter: **Shoppable Posts**.

This functionality originated in 2018 and unintentionally changed the ecommerce social media landscape.

Spearmint LOVE, an eco-friendly children's clothing company, saw a 25 percent increase in traffic and an **8 percent** increase in revenue after using Instagram's shoppable posts.

Lulus, a womenswear brand, received **over 100,000 visits** to their website and 1,200 product orders after using shoppable posts.

Shoppable posts give brands the opportunity to **showcase their storefront** within the social network. Businesses can use shoppable posts in standard image posts and Stories.

Tip 5: Grow Your Followers

While growing your followers on Instagram may seem like common sense for any business, there are adding perks.

When an Instagram account gets more than 10,000 subscribers, you have the opportunity to add direct links into Stories. This will take a user to your website with one swipe.

Ecommerce brands can also create multiple folders for their Stories. These folders can be used as categories of your website like “Semi-Annual Sale” or “Best Sellers.”

Tip 6: Start Thinking about IGTV

IGTV hasn't taken off yet for ecommerce brands like the other Instagram features. However, Instagram's Collections may be the starting point.

The new IGTV layout resembles Pinterest, especially with their Collections.

If you wanted to showcase an outfit from clothes from your store, brands could add a collection of items you wore. This includes shoppable posts.

And, IGTV isn't the only new feature for ecommerce brands that Instagram is rolling out.

Word on the street is that Instagram developers are building native payment options.

Soon, Instagram users will be able to book movie tickets, restaurants, or potentially buy without being redirected to the website.

Pinterest

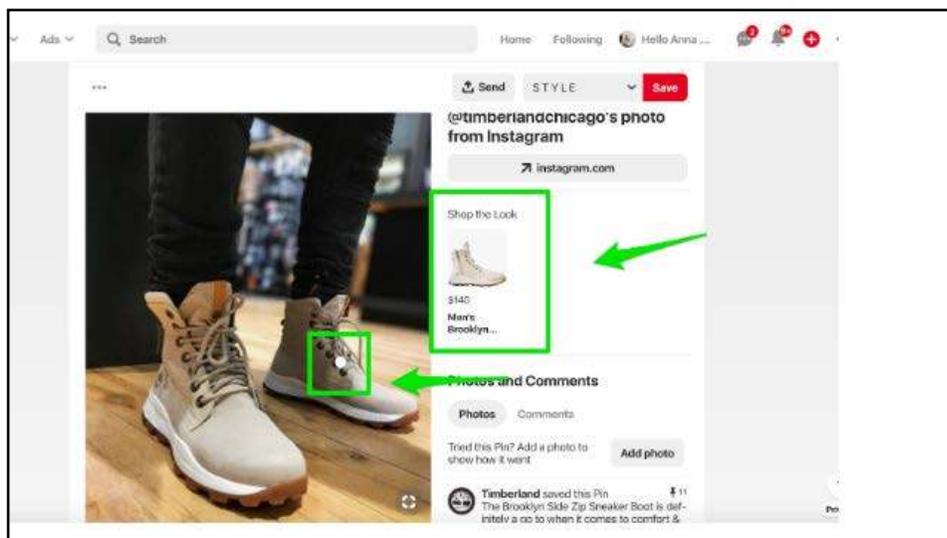
Tip 7: Add Shop the Look to Your Pins

With new updates from Facebook and Instagram hitting the scene on what feels like a daily basis, it can be easy to forget about social networks like Pinterest.

But, with the [announcement of Pinterest's IPO](#), this changes the game for ecommerce brands.

Pinterest will now compete with Google as it looks to increase ad revenue through direct response, on-platform purchases, and better contextual discovery with its ['Shop the Look' Pins](#).

You can see brands like Timberland already using the new tool with the help of [Pinterest partner Olapic](#).

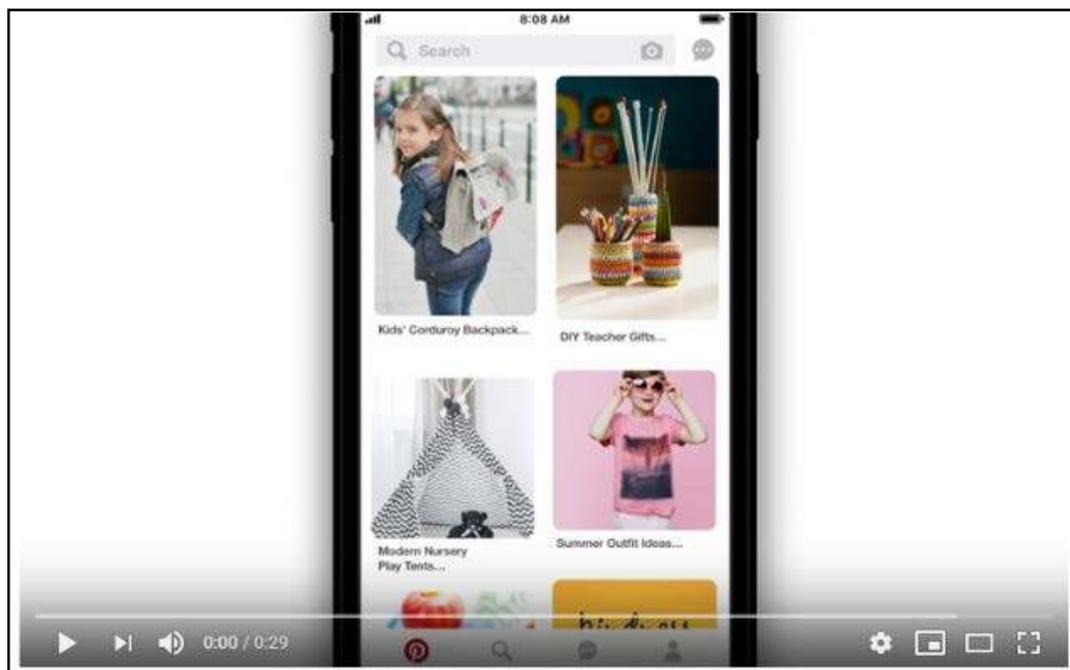


Want more good news? Kunlong Gu, Engineer for Pinterest, announced it would be [automating this 'Shop the Look' process](#).

Tip 8: Dedicate a Budget to Promoted Carousel Ads

Before you use up your ad budget with Facebook and Instagram, set aside a small portion to test Pinterest's Promoted Carousel ads.

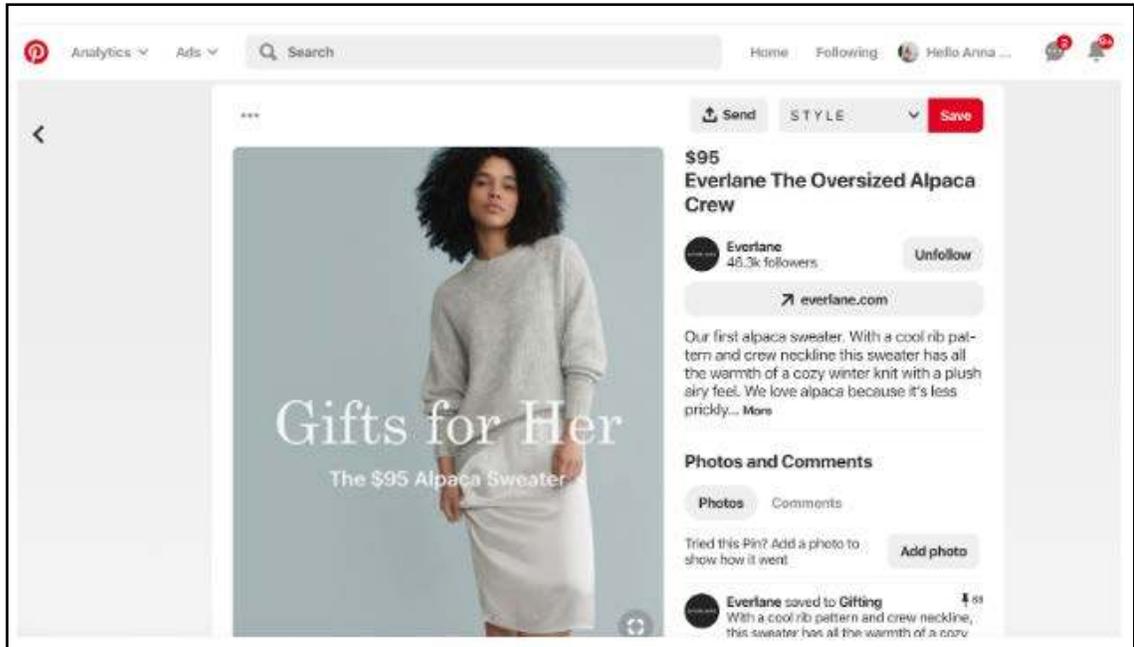
Brands like Toyota, REI, Everlane, Away, etc. can already be seen using these. Check out [Cheerios](#).



This campaign saw a 11.4 point lift in ad awareness and an 8.6 point lift in message association.

Tip 9: Activate Product Pins

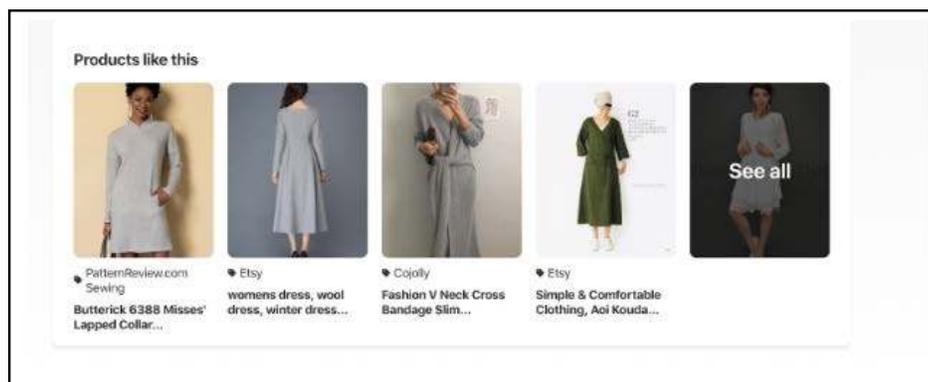
In October 2018, Pinterest **announced that Product Pins** would be replacing Buyable Pins.



These Product Pins display pricing, stock information, and the ability to go to the product to buy in just a few clicks.

In the past quarter, Pinterest saw a **40 percent** increase in clicks on products to retail sites.

Once you have Product Pins in place, it will also direct users to a shoppable feed like this:



Others to Keep Your Eye On

Tip 10: Test Collection Ads on Snapchat

Snapchat partnered with Amazon in 2018 to test visual search shopping which led to the launch of Collection Ads.

According to a company blog post, eBay saw a **5x** higher engagement rate with Collection Ads compared to standard Snap Ads.

The company is currently working with 40 new partners to grow their ecommerce offerings so I'd recommend stalking Snapchat if you're looking to explore new channels.

Tip 11: Create a Video Strategy for YouTube

Nearly two-thirds of social media users report they use YouTube (63 percent) and Instagram (61 percent) more in 2018 than 2017, compared to 52 percent who say they use Facebook more this year.

That's why we're seeing ecommerce brands start to take to YouTube to sell.

Luxyhair.com grew to a **7-figure business** with YouTube.

And, Zagg utilized YouTube ads to increase conversions by **75 percent.**

Social Media Is More Than a Sales Channel

Success doesn't happen by accident on social media, no matter what you're selling.

You have to start, and fail, then succeed. You have to realize the value of building a brand, then adapt to your community.

Many ecommerce companies make the mistake of assuming that just because you're on social media means you're giving your consumers what you want.

But, the reality is, there are millions of options for consumers now. How can your ecommerce product be different?

A study by Sprout Social found that a whopping **84.9 percent** of customers won't purchase an item until they've seen it multiple times.

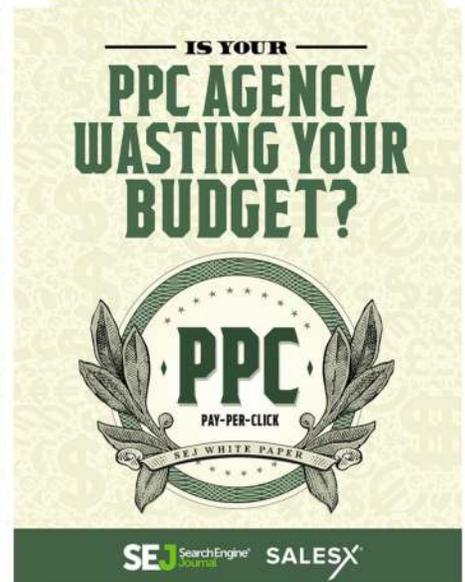
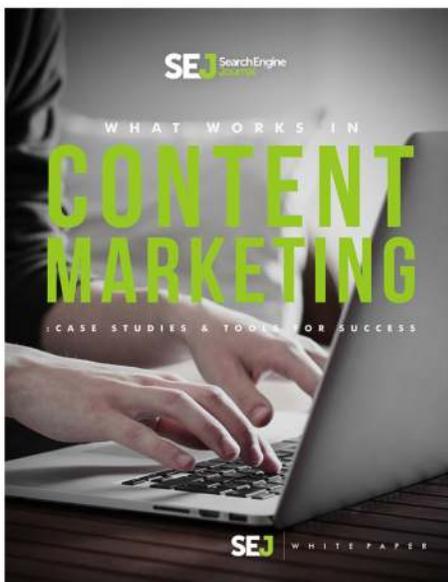
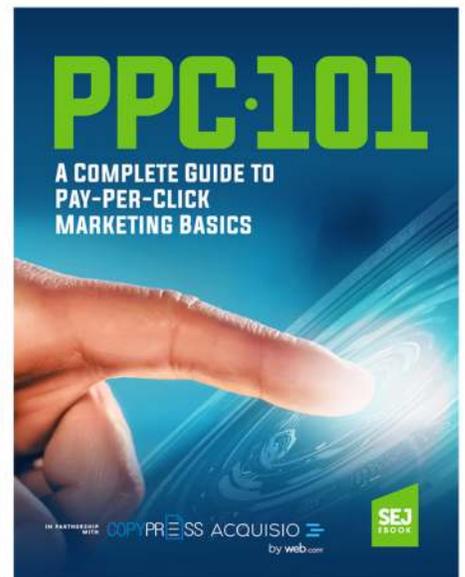
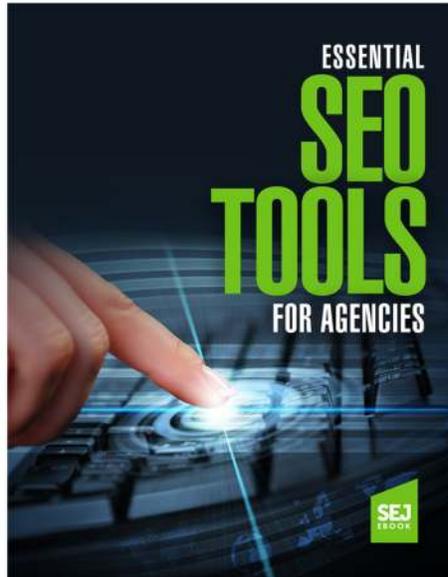
You have to find the channel your customers are listening to and talk to them there to develop a connection. It's a continuous circle of testing.

Conclusion

There is not a one-size-fits-all solution for ecommerce growth. Inside the guide, we've presented many strategies and tactics to help you scale up your ecommerce website. Now, it's up to you to decide your next steps on your journey.

Will you structure your PPC campaigns? Does posting content on Instagram Stories makes sense for your audience, or will you go after a new Snapchat feature instead?

No matter the path you take, make your ecommerce site the best by setting the foundation for long-term, scalable growth.



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