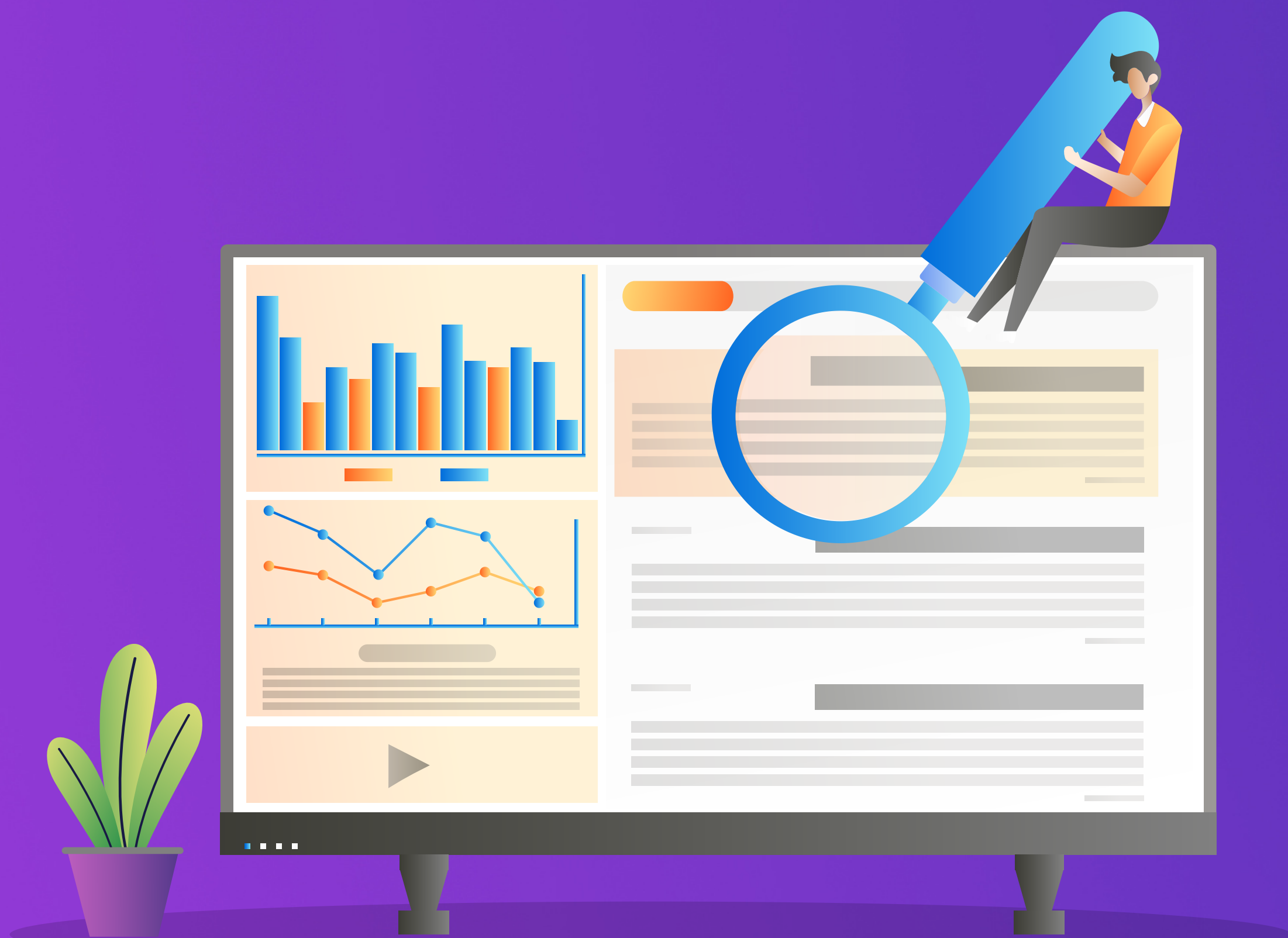


# A STEP-BY-STEP GUIDE TO SEO

WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW





Learning SEO is a great way to drive more traffic to your site. However, many people shy away from SEO as it often seems complicated.

Lucky for you, you've found the right post. Here you will learn everything you need to about SEO to help you progress from a novice to a pro.

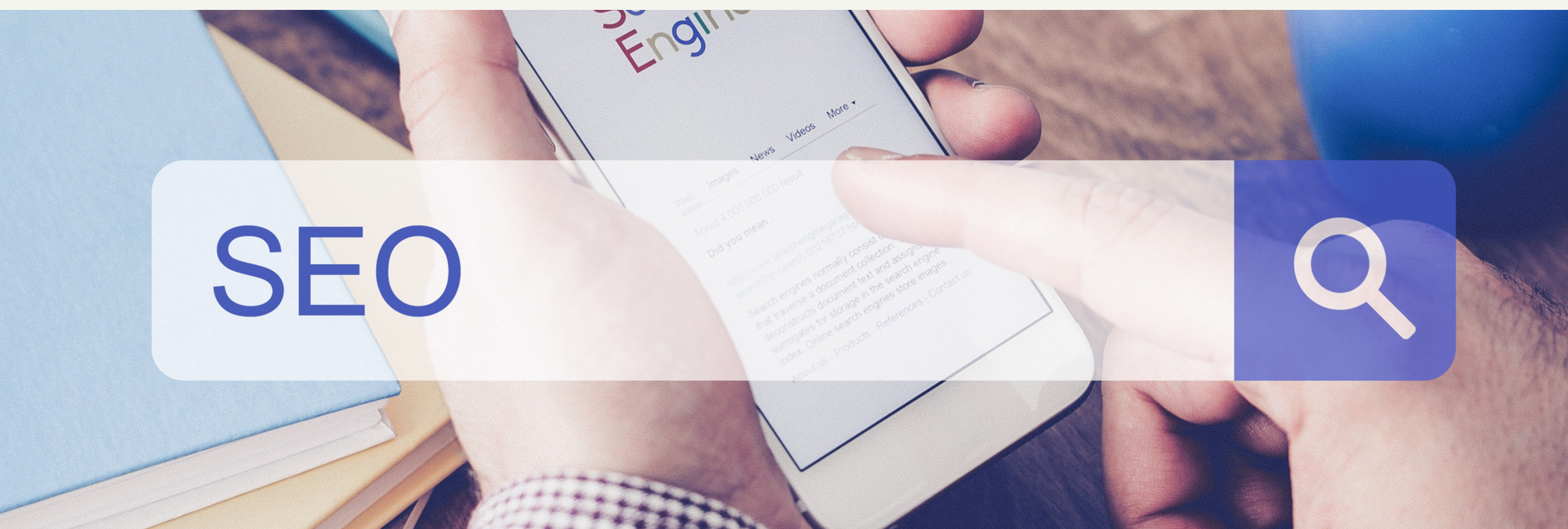
Let's begin, shall we?

## UNDERSTANDING SEO

Before we can even start understanding how to use SEO, it is crucial that you first learn what SEO really is.

SEO is all about making your site more visible on search engines. Some of the activities involved in SEO include optimizing content, technical planning, and conducting marketing strategies.

With that information in mind, you are able to progress in your SEO journey. There is no magic formula and it's all about becoming good at high-impact activities and that direct the most traffic.



## UNDERSTANDING HOW SEARCH ENGINES WORK

Search engines make use of links. They send out web crawlers also known as spiders to billions of web pages across the internet. They then save the web pages' HTML code in a process known as indexing.

The index will be updated each time a crawler crawls to your site. Your webpage is now ready to appear in search results.

To make it easy to find by a user, there are several factors that most search engines consider:



- The intent of the users' query
- Context of the users' query
- Information requested in the query
- Does the information on the page answer the users' query
- Does the information on the webpage offer answers to related questions
- The speed at which the site loads
- Is the web page domain authority on the topic
- Do users find the required information easily

Let's now take a look at some of the major SEO essentials which you can follow to ensure that your site ranks high in search engines.



# SEO VOCABULARY THAT YOU SHOULD KNOW

On your journey to becoming a great SEO expert, there are some terms that you will come across. The main terms include:

- On-page SEO
- Off-page SEO
- Black hat SEO
- White hat SEO

On-page and off-page SEO refer to whether you conduct your SEO on your website. On-page means all the SEO activities that you can do to your website. These include:

- Keyword research
- Internal linking
- Title tag and meta descriptions
- Content optimization

Off-page SEO refers to all the activities that you can do outside of the website to help you boost your site rankings. It is mainly about quality backlinking.

Other activities may include guest posting and email outreach.

White Hat SEO refers to the set rules of and those web owners who adhere to those rules. On the other hand, black hat SEO means those that do not adhere to the set rules.

Black hat SEO often means unethical and spammy methods used to improve a site's rankings. While such practices can get you ranked quicker, search engines will likely notice and penalize your website for it.

White hat SEO is a longer-term strategy and means that it will take you a while for your site to be ranked high on search results. However, your site will not be penalized as you will have followed the set rules.

## How long will it take to master SEO?

It may take you only a couple of weeks to master the basis of SEO. However, since SEO is ongoing, it may take you months or even years to master it. The idea here is that learning SEO is a long-term strategy.



## 1. PERFORMING AN SEO AUDIT

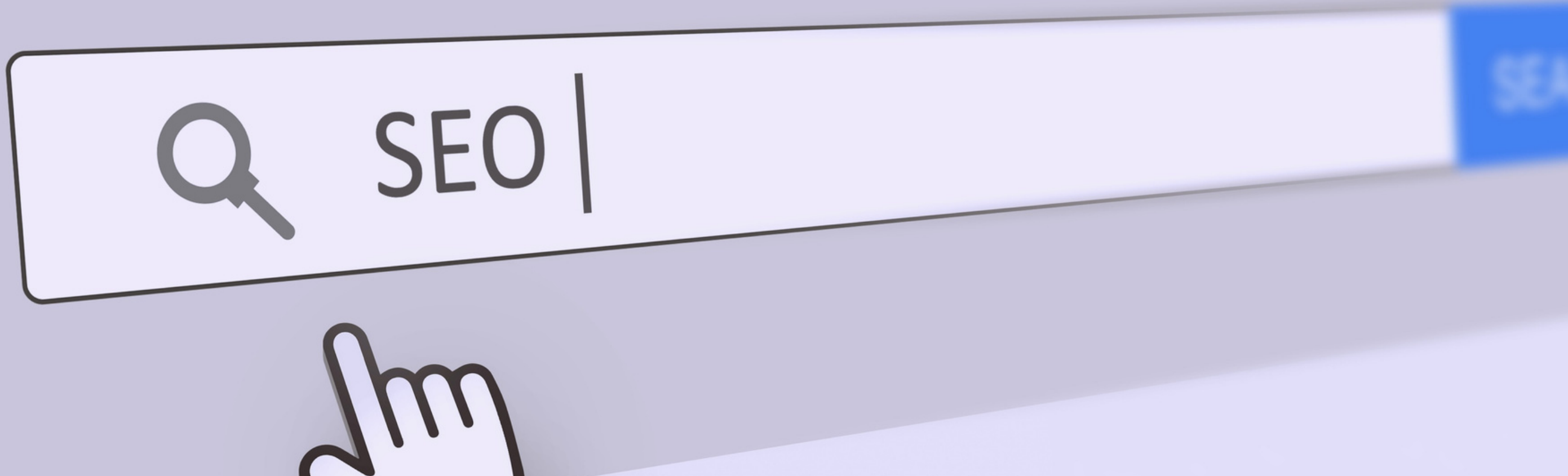
SEO audit means performing a thorough evaluation of your website to determine metrics such as speed and performance, and other search engine requirements.

With the information, you can upgrade your site and make necessary changes intended to improve the performance and make it more efficient for web crawlers.

This step is intended to find out the issues affecting your site and making improvements.

Some of the factors to consider include:

- HTTP 404 Error
- Unavailable image alt text and attributes
- Whether your site is secure
- The page and loading speeds
- Checking for the XML Site map
- Mobile-friendliness



## 2. THE IMPORTANCE OF KEYWORDS

This is a major part of search engine optimization. Keyword research helps you determine which topics are trending for your niche.

Keyword research also allows you to find profitable opportunities on new and interesting topics.

You can find keywords by starting with seed words. These are phrases that you presume online users will use to find what they are looking for.

Google search engines will also offer keywords on SERP such as People Also Ask, related searches, and Google AutoComplete.

These offer real keywords used by people around the world.

Thirdly, you can also use keyword tools. Note that the free keyword tools are very limited. If you plan on doing business and making money with your site, it's a good idea to use a paid keyword tool.

Note that you should always aim to find keywords that have a high search volume and are relevant. They should also have low difficulty.

Consider long-tail keywords. These have a low difficulty level and also have higher conversion rates. Long-tail keywords have more than a single word.



### 3. OPTIMIZING YOUR CONTENT

Content is one of the most important players in SEO. Thus if you want to improve your site's ranking you need an effective content marketing strategy.

The first thing to keep in mind is the needs of your audience and the niche you are in. Now that you know how to find the right keywords, you need to find the right topics.

When searching for keywords you may find several such as starting a blog, how to start a blog and how to create a blog. While they are all different, they also all speak about the same topic.

You will not need therefore to create a separate post for each. Instead, group them into one post. Now that you've found a topic, go back to the keyword and use the ones that best represent the topic.

Each topic should have one focus keyword.

You can follow this strategy with future topics.

Now you will need to organize them. This is where content hubs come into play. These are all pages that are related to one topic.

Using links, you are can provide insight into a subtopic much more in-depth.

You will thus need pillar content that provides an overview of the topic. You will then need cluster content that goes much more in-depth in subtopics.

The benefits of organizing content in this fashion include:

- Offering a better value to your readers.
- Adding structure to your content making it easier to find.
- Boosting your authority on the subject.

#### Optimizing your focus keyword

The focus keyword should be utilized to optimize a web page for a specific topic. There are several places thus you can use the focus keyword for SEO. These are:

- The URL
- Title tag
- Headings as well as subheadings
- Met description
- Body text
- Anchor text
- Image metadata

Note that when adding the focus keyword the meta description and the title tag you should put it as close to the start as possible.

Ensure that the URL is short and simple to grasp. While it is not among the most critical SEO factors, it is still important.

Always ensure you add the focus keyword on the H1 heading as well as on the subheadings.

The image metadata can be the file name, alt text, image title, and caption. You can add the focus keywords in any of these. However the alt text is the most important element to add the keyword.





## Content Quality

Ranking for keywords continues to be a difficult process. This is because most niches are oversaturated. However, you always have an edge when it comes to content creation. Always create content that is much better than what the competitors have to offer. It's called the 10x content strategy.

- And this is how it works...
- Ensure that you cover the topic much more thoroughly and in-depth
- Provide information that is more up to date
- Provide original data
- Ensure the webpage features a more appealing design
- Use custom made visuals as opposed to using stock images
- Utilize visual media such as videos, images, and infographics in your content
- Improve user experience by providing well structures and simple to read text
- Fast loading website both on mobile or desktop



## 4. ON-PAGE SEO

When it comes to optimizing your on-page SEO, there are several tools at your disposal that you need to master.

### Internal linking

External linking often gets the main attention when it comes to SEO, however, internal linking is just as important. There are several advantages of internal linking:

- They improve the crawlability of your site
- They improve user to experience and engagement
- Can help boost rankings as google gets a much better understanding of the linked page

So how do you achieve a well-interlinked website?

Start by having well-structured navigational elements. Make it easy for people to navigate your websites using a well-structured menu and categories.

## Links to the body of the page

Secondly, add links to the body of the page. Think about further reading boxes that send readers to other pages on the site. A few tips to keep in mind:

Whenever you plan on publishing a post, keep the reader in mind and link to relevant content that you think they might need and find useful.

Once you have published the post, also include a couple of links to other related pages.

## Page speed

Readers are unwilling to wait more than a few seconds for a site to load. Page load speed is a critical factor of on-page SEO. To ensure a fast loading website:

- Choose a top-notch web hosting with good server response time
- Use caching to make it quicker for a visitor when they visit the site for a second time
- Use accelerated mobile pages technology
- Limit the use of third-party scripts such as WordPress plugins and use them when you really need to.
- Optimize web pages by using the right type of files and images that load faster

## Site maps

Ensure that you have site maps. This refers to a structured list of the websites on your page. Having site maps makes it much easier and more efficient for web crawlers to find your web pages.

Sites that would most benefit from a sitemap include:

- Those that have many pages
- Websites that lack too many internal links
- Websites that are new and thus lack backlinking
- Sites that have plenty of media files



## HTTP

It is absolutely important to put the security of your site visitors first using an SSL certificate. An HTTPS protocol is also used by Google as a ranking signal.

## Mobile-Friendly website

Another important element of on-page SEO is ensuring that your website is mobile-friendly.

Keep in mind that websites are now web crawled and indexed in their mobile version first before their desktop version.

## Title tags and meta descriptions

The title tag and the meta description are displayed on the search results on search engines. They also show when the link is shared on social media.

These are HTML elements that show the title and description of the web page.



They are highly important as they are the main way to catch the reader's attention on the SERP.

A few tips when writing the title and Meta description:

- Add the focus keyword
- Ensure they are not too long as otherwise they will likely be truncated by Google
- Make them stand out by adding caps, brackets, brand name, and even question

## Add Image Alt Texts

Image alt text is crucial to on-page SEO. This is a text that offers a description of the image and shows when the image is unable to load.

The alt text makes it easier for web crawlers to find the image and it also ensures that site visitors can still read and find out what the image is about. Avoid keyword stuffing and keep the alt text short.

## Featured snippets

This is a search result that appears above the first results on Google's first page in SERP. The goal of the featured snippet is to offer a direct answer to the reader's question.

It can be the form of a paragraph, table, or list.

- To get a featured snippet
- Answer a question first
- Look for keywords with featured snippets
- Use around 40 to 50 words
- Find out what is working for your competitors



## 5. BACKLINKS AND LINK BUILDING

Backlinking is an important concept that anyone looking to boost their rankings on search engines should learn.

But what is backlinking?

If you were to take a link from page A and add it to page B, then you would say that page B is backlinked to page A.

Backlinking plays a huge role as far as ranking signals go. The idea behind them is that if many pages link back to a certain page, then that means that page is important and has valuable information.



## Different types of links

There are various types of links namely:

- Internal and external links - internal links are links from pages within the website while external links are links from outside the website.
- No flow link – this contains a rel="nofollow" on its HTML code. It tells search engines to not pass linked equity to the linked page.
- Link Profile- refers to all links that point to your website. The better your link profile, the better your rankings. Your link profile should contain a diversity of links and should have quality backlinks from relevant sites.
- Anchor text-this is a part of the hyperlink that is visible and clickable.

## Features of a good quality backlink

Not all backlinks will be equal. Some will receive higher amounts of link equity than others will. Factors to consider to ensure quality backlinking include:

- Relevance-linking page should have a similar topic.
- Authoritative website – the pages that have more links linking to them will provide more link equity to your page as well.
- The backlink should be placed nearer to the top of the post.
- Contains relevant anchor text



## Importance of link building

Link building is highly important when it comes to your website's SEO. This is because it is hard for a new site to rank without any backlinks.

- Link building is about trying to influence the quality of your backlinks as well as the number of your backlinks.
- There are several ways that you can achieve this:
- Buying backlinks – this is not recommended as it is both expensive and risky. Google can penalize your site for it.
- Linkable assets – this is where you create such valuable content that attracts backlinks
- Guest posting – this is where a writer and author if a different site posts on your site then links the content back to their suite.
- Competitor backlinks – here you use a backlink analysis tool to scan through your competitors' websites and find sites that are also willing to link to you.
- Skyscraper technique – here you find the best article about a topic and create even better content. Next, contact the pages linking to that article and instead ask them to link to your article.

## 6. ANALYTICS AND METRICS

Here we find out about the main data analytics tools and essentials that any web owners needs to use. You cannot carry out search engine optimization without website analytics.

To improve anything about your website SEO, you will need to first measure it. Some of the crucial SEO questions that you are able to answer include:

- Which are the best keywords for SEO?
- Where are your site visitors located?
- Which channels bring in the most visitors?
- Which are the most popular web pages?

Let's dive in!

### Google search console

This free tool by Google makes it easy for site visitors to determine their site performance in Google search. Other information that you get include google coverage, URL inspection, removals, site maps, inspections, security issues, links, enhancements.

With the performance reports you will be able to:

- Troubleshoot performance drops
- Optimize pages that have CTR drops
- Compare how your website performs on both desktop and mobile versions
- See low hanging keywords which rank easier

### Google Analytics

This is a great tool for viewing user behavior and tracking website traffic. Information that you get with Google Analytics include:

- Viewing the pages that have the most traffic
- Seeing the pages that people visit first on your site
- Finding out the best sources of traffic for your site
- Seeing audience demographics such as age, gender
- Some of the most useful metrics for a new website include:
  - Percentage of returning victors
  - Bounce rate
  - Pages per session
  - Average time on page



### Rank Tracking

This is the process of seeing how your website ranks for important keywords. Google analytics and google console can seem a bit over-complicated with too many metrics.

Rank tracking however is a much simpler tool to master.

Some of the information and advantages that you stand to gain with rank tracking include:

- Detecting ranking drops and spikes via reports and data
- Tracking traffic in specific locations
- Track competitors to find out what works for them,
- View updated positions of relevant keywords



## Some tips for analytics tracking

- When tracking your metrics and doing your analysis always remember that performance fluctuates on a regular basis. It is best therefore to view the bigger picture.
- While you may not need to evaluate all the metrics, it is good to understand what they are and what they mean to be able to make viable conclusions.
- Understand the content. Looking at data is not enough, it is also highly crucial that you understand why something happened.
- Make use of annotations and then see whether they had an influence on the results.
- Finally set up alerts. This will ensure that you get notified when something happens.

