

Your seo checklist: 4 steps to optimizing your website

[Technology](#), [Internet](#)



In his book , SEO and online marketing expert Jon Rognerud shows you how to build a high-performance website and get top ranking on all search engines. In this edited excerpt, the author outlines a broad strategy for successfully optimizing your website.

The goal of search engine optimization is to have the search engine spiders not only find your site and pages but also specifically rank the page relevance so that it appears at the top of the search engine results. The process of optimization is not a one-time process but requires maintenance, tuning, and continuous testing and monitoring.

Below is a broad four-step process for a strategy for search engine optimization. Use this as your top-level checklist.

Step 1: Target Market Business Analysis

- *Website analysis* . Analysis of meta sets/keywords, visible text and code to determine how well you're positioned for search engines. For example, how much code do you have on a page compared to text?
- *Competitive analysis* . Examination of content keywords and present engine rankings of competitive websites to determine an effective engine positioning strategy. Pick the top five results in theGooglelisting results to begin this process. Expand as necessary. Use tools such as Semrush. com and Keywordspy. com.
- *Initial keyword nomination* . Development of a prioritized list of targeted search terms related to your customer base and market

segment. Begin with this: What would you type into a search engine to find your business website or page? Then, ask your customers!

Step 2: Keyword Research and Development

- *Keyword analysis* . From nomination, further identify a targeted list of keywords and phrases. Review competitive lists and other pertinent industry sources. Use your preliminary list to determine an indicative number of recent search engine queries and how many websites are competing for each keyword. Prioritize keywords and phrases, plurals, singulars and misspellings. (If search users commonly misspell a keyword, you should identify and use it). Please note that Google will try to correct the term when searching, so use this with care.
- *Baseline ranking assessment* . You need to understand where you are now in order to accurately assess your future rankings. Keep a simple Excel sheet to start the process. Check weekly to begin. As you get more comfortable, check every 30 to 45 days. You should see improvements in website traffic, a key indicator of progress for your keywords. Some optimizers will say that rankings are dead. Yes, traffic and conversions are more important, but we use rankings as an indicator.
- *Goals and Objectives* . Clearly define your objectives in advance so you can truly measure your ROI from any programs you implement. Start simple, but don't skip this step. Example: You may decide to increase website traffic from a current baseline of 100 visitors a day to 200 visitors over the next 30 days. Or you may want to improve your

current conversion rate of one percent to two in a specified period. You may begin with top-level, aggregate numbers, but you must drill down into specific pages that can improve products, services, and business sales.

Step 3: Content Optimization and Submission

- *Create page titles* . Keyword-based titles help establish page theme and direction for your keywords.
- *Create meta tags* . Meta description tags can influence click-throughs but aren't directly used for rankings. (Google doesn't use the keywords tag anymore.)
- *Place strategic search phrases on pages* . Integrate selected keywords into your website source code and existing content on designated pages. Make sure to apply a suggested guideline of one to three keywords/phrases per content page and add more pages to complete the list. Ensure that related words are used as a natural inclusion of your keywords. It helps the search engines quickly determine what the page is about. A natural approach to this works best. In the past, 100 to 300 words on a page was recommended. Many tests show that pages with 800 to 2, 000 words can outperform shorter ones. In the end, the users, the marketplace, content and links will determine the popularity and ranking numbers.
- *Develop new sitemaps for Google and Bing* . Make it easier for search engines to index your website. Create both XML and HTML versions. An

HTML version is the first step. XML sitemaps can easily be submitted via Google and Bing webmaster tools.

- *Submit website to directories (limited use)* . Professional search marketers don't submit the URL to the major search engines, but it's possible to do so. A better and faster way is to get links back to your site naturally. Links get your site indexed by the search engines. However, you should submit your URL to directories such as Yahoo! (paid), Business. com (paid) and DMOZ (free). Some may choose to include AdSense (google. com/adsense) scripts on a new site to get their Google Media bot to visit. It will likely get your pages indexed quickly.

Step 4: Continuous Testing and Measuring