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The 5 Most Important Things to Consider When Doing Localized SEO By Mo Mastafa (c) 2012

First of all, let us just quickly define what Localized Search Engine Optimization (Local SEO) is. Local SEO is basically the process of optimizing your website to perform better in the search engines by allowing it to be found for the keywords which relate to the area in which you're located.

To illustrate, if you were looking to be found locally when users search for SEO services in your area, and you're based in Wales, one such search term you may look to optimize for may be 'SEO wales'. This would naturally vary depending on the location in which you're situated and what users are actually looking for.

So let us take a look at the 5 most important things to remember when optimizing for local search terms:

1) Keyword Research

It all starts with keyword research. This not only involves knowing your niche but also knowing the keywords that people use to search for your niche specific products or services. One great way to establish if there is relevant traffic for a particular keyword, before optimizing your site, is to use the Google AdWords keyword tool. A quick Google search will allow you to find the tool.

Let's assume you are a Cardiff based company that sells second-hand cars throughout Wales. The first thing you'd look to do once you've opened the Google keyword tool is, adjust the search settings so that they are set to display only results relevant to the UK.

Then enter a seed keyword relating to your product or services, plus insert the area name which you're targeting e.g. 'second-hand cars'. You'll now be able to see how many searches

are performed for that keyword phrase, plus get an indication of the level of advertiser competition for that particular keyword or phrase.

But don't just assume that because you sell second-hand automobiles in Wales, that people looking to buy in that region will simply type 'second-hand automobiles in wales' into Google. As a further analysis might reveal that the actual search term people are using is actually 'second-hand cars in wales'.

So, had you not performed proper keyword research and simply made

an assumption, as many webmasters do, you could be wasting precious time optimizing for the wrong keywords.

Tip - If the keyword tool shows that the search terms you're looking to optimize have a high level of advertiser competition, don't be put off. This normally indicates that they are also highly commercial terms, meaning people may be more likely to buy!

2) Onsite Optimization

Once you have created your list of the most relevant keywords, it's time to start optimizing your site. Make sure that your main keywords appear in your title tags and in your H1 tags.

As in the above example, you would now use the keyword phrase 'second-hand cars in wales' in your home page title tag. Ideally aligned to the left followed by the pipe character, and then insert your domain name or company name last. But make sure that you optimize each page for a different, yet related keyword so your site has a natural feel to it.

Also ensure that your keywords appear throughout your content, but don't go overboard on this. You don't want to appear spammy. Instead, try to write naturally and let your keywords just fall into place where they seem relevant.

For example, you might write sentences that include your keyword phrase, or variations of them, such as 'If you're looking to buy a second-hand car, then you've come to the right place. At Joe's Auto Store we specialize in second-hand cars in wales.'

Also make sure that your company address is showing in the contact us page as this will also be indexed and can reaffirm to the search engines exactly where you are located.

Additionally, if it's a brand new site, you may want to buy a .co.uk domain name (which ideally contains your location) as well as host your site on UK based servers, as this will also allow you to rank better locally, especially if you're customers are all searching from within the UK.

3) Create Unique Content

Create regular unique and fresh content that will draw visitors back to your site. Make sure you add value and people will naturally come back. They may even point a link or two at your site in the process and always try to get some backlinks from websites and companies that are also located in your area.

These links will not only drive visitors from linking sites to yours, they will also help boost your search engine rankings.

One good way to do this is to include a resources page, listing valuable information such as 'The Top 10 Driving Routes in Wales'. You might even want to make things more interactive by including a Google map so people can plan their driving routes for the holiday seasons.

4) Build High Quality Backlinks

As mentioned above, one of the best ways to build backlinks is to create unique content on your site. If what you've written is newsworthy, you may want to use a social bookmarking site such as DIGG to let the world know.

An important point to remember when building backlinks is to focus on quality over quantity. So make sure that the links pointing to your site are from reputable and related sites. A simple rule is this - if a site complements your site but is not a direct competitor, then you should ask them for a link.

For example, in the second-hand cars example, you could try to get a link from the Welsh Tourist Board or the Drivers Association for the Wales area.

Plus you will definitely want to get your site listed in Google Places (Formerly Google Local). This will require a small confirmation process, but is well worth the effort.

Also, don't be afraid to point some links outwards. Just make sure you point at reputable sites because the search engines won't like it if you keep bad company so to speak. Plus your readers will love it if you help make their experience better. You could for example point a link to the main automobile breakdown associations in the area, so they can bookmark your website for future reference.

5) Article Marketing

Another great way to create backlinks, other than simply asking webmasters to point links at your site, is to write great unique articles and post them on article directories. If readers like what they see, they may pick your articles up and place them on their own sites and in the process credit you with a backlink.

A tip would be to include your search phrase you want to be found for in your author bio box since this will give the search engines a better idea as to what your site is about.

In the above example, it could read along the lines of 'Joe's Auto Store has been helping local car lovers throughout Wales & England find second hand cars in Wales for over a decade' and then making the keywords become the hyperlink back to your site.

Finally, you should also try to get articles placed on local article directories such as the (<http://www.plusonesfast.com/>)Welsh Business Directory.

So there you have a great 5 step formula for helping your website perform better in the local search results using natural methods.

Follow the above steps and you can be sure that you will keep both your readers as well as the search engines happy.

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