

Creating Business Momentum.SM

Get Your SEO Strategy in Focus

Search engine optimization (SEO) is a core part of any marketing plan.

Sometimes, these strategies and tactics go untouched for months or longer. Here are recommendations on where to start, and how to stay ahead of the curve.

When it comes to SEO, there are no certainties, only best practices. And the only constant is change, as search engines are regularly refining the way they view and accordingly rank websites. A combination of well-written code, expert copywriting and understanding the importance of link authority are all practices we have had the time and experience to perfect while always staying current on latest strategies and changes.



In terms of driving traffic to your website, there are two approaches to how your site interacts with the engines. The first is what we call “organic” SEO, or how the engines rank your site based on naturally crawling your website. Organic SEO, is essentially, free. The second method is generally known as Pay-Per-Click (PPC) search engine marketing (SEM). PPC/SEM is a much more direct, hands-on, and instant results technique. PPC/SEM is a form of online advertising whereby visitors are directed to your website after clicking on an ad - the advertiser then pays for each visitor on a per-click basis. This Merit Mile best practice focuses on organic SEO.

Our best practices for SEO consist of four steps which can always be repeated when necessary:

- 1. Identify & Evaluate**
- 2. Write & Develop**
- 3. Measure**
- 4. Adjust**

1. **Identify & Evaluate** your current SEO strategy and existing website's code, content, and copy. Some specific things to check for:

- a. Proper markup – this includes correct H tags, human-readable URL's
- b. Optimize your sitemap, or page structure document
- c. Evaluate content – make sure your copy is rich with keywords, but not too rich (well-written website is the best search engine strategy one can have)
- d. Evaluate link authority – are you linked to from elsewhere?

2. **Write & Develop** compelling and quality, rich copy and code:

- a. Alt tags on images
- b. CSS-based markup (use tables sparingly)
- c. Keep content together
- d. Use a development SEO cheat sheet

3. **Measure** your users' experience and test effectiveness:

- a. Traffic and sources
- b. Page views
- c. Bounce rate
- d. Conversion rate
- e. Time on site
- f. Exit pages

4. **Adjust** based on effectiveness, rinse and repeat. Some markets require a re-evaluation once a week, and others once or twice a year:

In summary while there is and always will be differences between search engines, Google accounts for roughly 50% of the search engine market, and look for the Bing/Yahoo partnership to make a strong run at this market share battle in the coming year. All engines have unique processes, but they generally follow the same guidelines. Quality content, smart keyword strategies, and compliant code are the basic principles that have the potential to boost your organic website traffic results.