

Digital Masterclass Series

The Importance of Going Digital in a Post- COVID World

Topic 10:
The Basics of SEO (Search
Engine Optimisation)

Collaboration, Respect, Service Excellence,
Integrity, Innovation



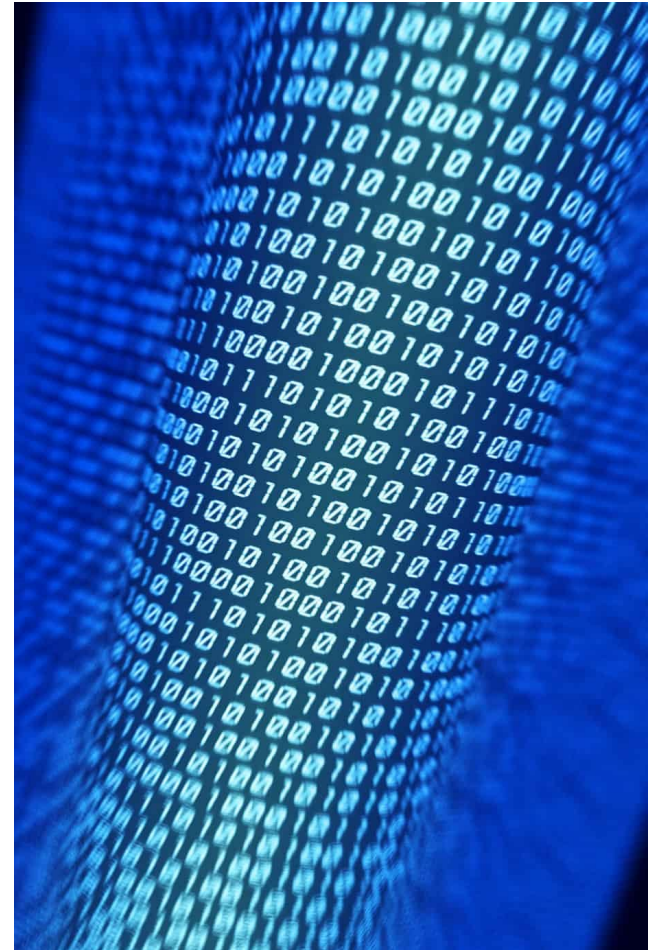
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Today's topic

The Basics of SEO (Search engine Optimisation)

An introduction to SEO, how it works, and how it may (or may not) be a useful business strategy.



Agenda

1. What we're going to achieve today.
2. How does Google decide what websites to show in search?
3. Why is search traffic important?
4. Search results vs paid results.
5. Search Engine Optimisation simplified (*very simplified*).
6. So does my business need SEO?
7. Briefing a freelancer or agency.
8. Useful links.



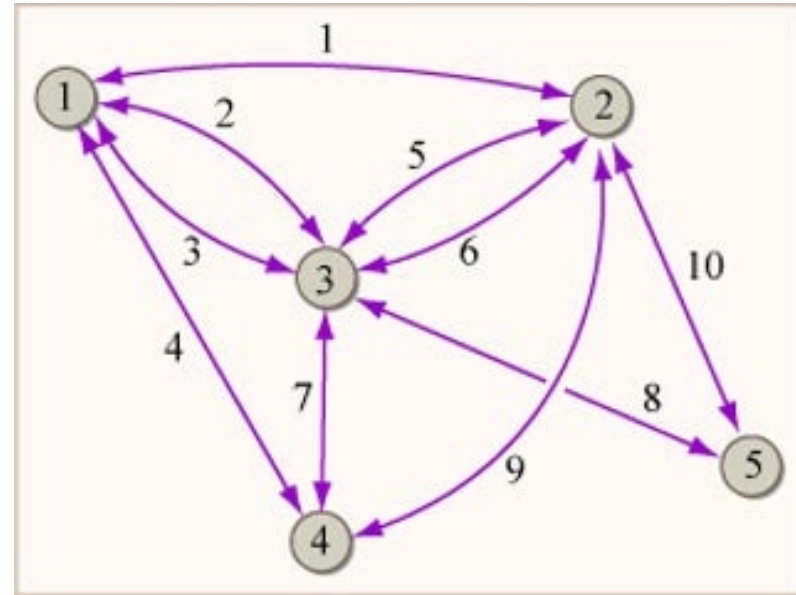
What we're going to achieve today

- This webinar explains how Google search can benefit your business.
- Its purpose is to give you the confidence to brief an agency or freelancer about increasing your Google search traffic.
- The webinar will not delve into the technical aspects of Google's search engine, as this immense topic is beyond today's scope. Rather, it will provide a high-level and simplified overview.

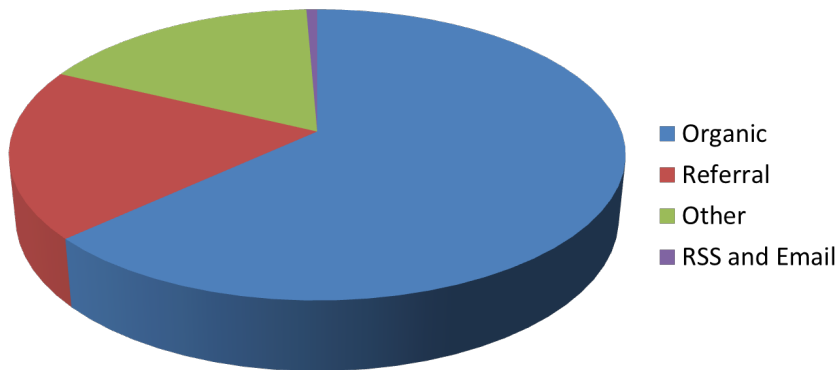


How does Google decide what websites to show in search?

- Google is big. Really, *really* big. It processes an estimated 3.8 million queries *per minute*.
[Source: [Wall Street Journal](#)]
- To make sense of all this data, Google uses a mathematical formula, called an algorithm. This determines the order in which web pages are shown when someone types in a search. The words in the search are *keywords*.
- The Google algorithm is thought to measure 200+ separate factors to gauge the relevance of web pages. *Every page* you see in a search has been 'assessed' according to 200+ criteria.
- This algorithm is also constantly updated.



Why is search traffic important?



- Search traffic remains the most widely used method for finding online information.
- The higher a web page appears in search results, the more clicks it gets.
- Additionally, a business with a good position in Google (i.e. on the first page) can 'passively' attract traffic. Channels like email, social media require 'active' effort.
- Savvy businesses try to improve where they appear in a Google search. This is known as **Search Engine Optimisation** i.e. SEO.

Search results vs paid results



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- Note the difference between ‘natural’ Google search traffic, and paid Google traffic.
- Google lets you purchase advertisements that appear in premium positions (see example).
- Ads appear for as long as an advertiser pays.
- Paid Google ads have no influence on ‘natural’ search traffic.
- The example shows ads for the keywords [seo advice]. Note how ads appear before ‘natural’ results.

The screenshot shows a Google search for 'seo advice'. The search bar at the top contains the text 'seo advice'. Below the search bar, there are navigation options: 'All', 'Videos', 'News', 'Images', 'Maps', and 'More'. The search results show 'About 64,100,000 results (0.61 seconds)'. The first three results are paid advertisements, each starting with 'Ad ·' followed by the website name and phone number. The first ad is from 'www.searchmarketinggroup.com.au' with the title 'SEO Strategy That Works seo - Long Term SEO Growth Strategy'. The second ad is from 'www.bemedia.com.au' with the title 'Best SEO Practices - Boost Your Websites Ranking'. The third ad is from 'www.paddleads.com.au' with the title '4 Things You Can Do Yourself - Download the Free SEO Guide'. The fourth ad is from 'www.crazydomains.com.au' with the title 'A Simple SEO Tool for SMBs - DIY your SEO today'. A red box highlights the first three ads with the text 'Paid ads'. At the bottom of the search results, there is a section titled 'Here are the SEO tips:' with a list of five tips: 'Improve existing content with missing subtopics.', 'Send emails to everyone you link to.', 'Add internal links to new pages.', 'Do an annual content audit.', and 'Repurpose blog posts as videos.'. To the right of this list is a blue card with the text 'Quick SEO Tips' and an illustration of a superhero.

Search Engine Optimisation simplified (*very* simplified)

- The following fictitious example may help illustrate basic SEO principles.
- Greg operates a budget florist that delivers across Melbourne.
- He builds a new website. To get more visitors, he looks up what keywords people use in searches, using a commercial keyword research tool.
- He decides to call his website [**Greg’s cheap flower delivery in Melbourne**]. The site has keywords in prominent places, and he publishes helpful articles on this theme, along with pages related floristry topics.
- Greg hopes this content will give his website a good position in Google searches.

Keyword	Australian monthly searches	Global monthly searches
[flowers]	165k	4.9M
[flowers melbourne]	5.4k	8.4k
[cheap flower delivery melbourne]	1.3k	2.1k

Source: SEMrush,
January 2021

Search Engine Optimisation simplified (*very* simplified)

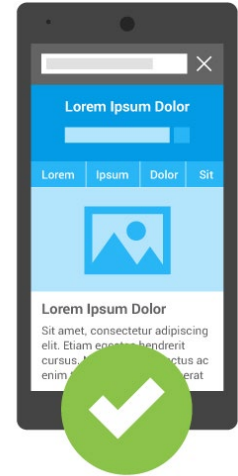
- In principle, publishing content with relevant keywords should get Greg's site noticed in search.
- However, the reality is that the web has an estimated 4.2 billion pages. [Source: [Hosting Tribunal](#)]
- Tens of millions of websites compete for the best spot in Google, including many florists.
- This is where SEO comes into play
- Companies try to influence where Google places them in search results by publishing relevant content (along with technical website improvements).



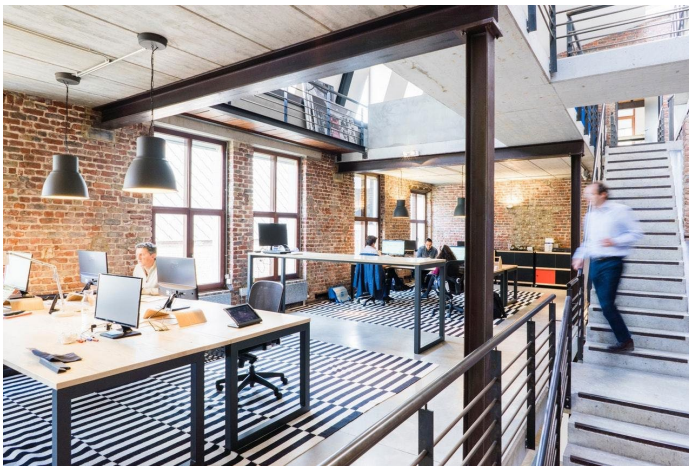
Search Engine Optimisation simplified (*very* simplified)

- Here are some of those 200 factors that Google 'assesses' when deciding where to place a page in a search.

- The depth and usefulness of your content.
- The number of keywords in your content.
- The number of links from reputable websites pointing to your site.
- The number of links from dodgy websites pointing to your site (this can *really* hurt you).
- How well the page is set up for mobile users.
- The ease with which information can be navigated via your front page.
- The complexity of your web address structure.
- The speed with which images load.
- And much, *much*, *muuuch* more.



How important is SEO for my business?



- No business would decline free search traffic. However, your business model and objectives should determine the amount of resource (and therefore cost) that goes into SEO.
- A pop-up café that doesn't offer takeaway, and which relies on local foot traffic, is unlikely to benefit from a huge SEO boost beyond the basics.
- In contrast, an accountancy firm that can service anyone in Australia via video might benefit from a more substantial SEO effort. For instance, the firm might publish tax articles for people to find in Google search.

How important is SEO for my business?

- Businesses can get an SEO benefit from basic (and free) tools like:
- [Google My Business](#). This will help with local searches.
- A [LinkedIn business page](#). This can act as a second website in searches.



- Certain characteristics are more likely to benefit from an investment in SEO, like:
 - Trades and professional services.
 - Specialists, unique businesses, or businesses with few competitors (admittedly, a rare and enviable position).
 - Start-ups or online-only traders.
 - Businesses with an online retail component.
 - Businesses that aren't solely reliant on a bricks and mortar presence.
 - 'Destinations' (medical, food, event, etc.).
 - Businesses that could realistically expect to be relevant to a wide audience.

How important is SEO for my business?

- Still unsure if SEO is for you? Consider the following 'checklist'.
 1. **Is there genuine demand for Google search terms my business is associated with?** There's no point in dominating the best Google search spots for something few people search for.
 2. **Do I know what I need SEO for?** Search traffic should support a specific business objective.
 3. **Am I treating SEO as an investment?** SEO audits, keyword research, generating content, technical improvements and monitoring traffic require time and resources.
 4. **Are my intentions realistic?** An independent florist website is unlikely to outrank a multi-national in the competitive online floral retailers for basic keywords.
 5. **Am I patient?** SEO is a slow-burn process. Results can take months to appear
- However, when done right, the pay-off can yield excellent, long-lasting results.



Briefing a freelancer or agency

- As with most business decisions, it pays to be prepared. Here's what you should know before engaging a freelancer or agency:



- How you expect SEO to meet your objectives.
- The target audience.
- Your competitors.
- Your budget.
- A timeline for delivery and expected results.
- How SEO will work with your other channels.
- Clear expectations about process for concepts, revisions, approvals, etc.
- Clear expectations about ongoing reporting.
- SEO improvements are often a significant element of a website refresh. Glen Eira's Digital Enablement Masterclass Series offers [a webinar](#) on this topic.

Useful links



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- *Wall Street Journal* article on how Google refines (and even manipulates) its search results (paywalled). Here: [wsj.com/articles/how-google-interferes-with-its-search-algorithms-and-changes-your-results-11573823753](https://www.wsj.com/articles/how-google-interferes-with-its-search-algorithms-and-changes-your-results-11573823753)
- Long-running article detailing Google ranking factors. Here: backlinko.com/google-ranking-factors
- Google's beginner's guide to SEO. Here: developers.google.com/search/docs/beginner/do-i-need-seo
- Google's introduction to how search works. Here: developers.google.com/search/docs/beginner/how-search-works
- Explanation of the staggering number of websites on the web. Here: hostingtribunal.com/blog/how-many-websites/