



# 2021 Voice Search Playbook

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# 2021 Voice Search Playbook

## INDEX:

1. Why Focus on Voice Search?
2. Sharing this Book
3. Why Write this Book
4. Expectations
5. Introduction
6. Section 0: Getting Started
  - a. Authority and Relevance
  - b. Keyword Research
7. Section 1: On-page Optimization
  - a. Page Load Speed
  - b. Domain Authority
  - c. Meta Tags
  - d. Frequently Asked Questions
  - e. Image Optimization
  - f. SSL
  - g. Rich Snippets
  - h. Mobile Optimization
8. Section 2: Off-page Optimization
  - a. Google My Business Page
  - b. Yelp profile
  - c. Apple Maps & Bing
  - d. Sitemap Submitted to Google
9. Section 3: On-going Optimization
  - a. Reputation & Reviews
  - b. Content Marketing
10. Conclusion
11. Special Offer

## Voice search is here to stay.

In fact, it will only continue to evolve as it simultaneously grows in adoption.

Congratulations! By reading this book you are now an early adopter of this game-changing technology, and have a huge leg up against your competition for that coveted Position 0 (More on that later). Taking action on the recommendations in this book will set your business apart as the leader when a potential customer asks their smart device a question that is relevant to your business.



**The next search engine is “voice” ..  
I’m completely convinced..**

*- Gary Vaynerchuk*

### Why Focus on Voice Search? – Voice Search Facts

Voice Search will play an increasingly large role in our day-to-day live over the next few years. Here are some facts as to why we believe it is critical for small businesses to be early adopters of this technology.

- One billion voice searches were made every month in 2018.
- 28% of people go on to call the business they voice search for.
- 52% of people who search by voice are interested in receiving info about deals, sales, and promotions from brands.
- 43% of voice-enabled device owners use the technology to shop.
- Voice-based searches using phones are also 3 times more likely to be specific to certain locations.
- 31% of smartphone users worldwide use voice search at least once a week.
- 72% of people who use voice search devices say they’ve become a part of their lives.
- 51% of people who shop via voice use it to research products.
- 65% of people who own an Amazon Echo or Google Home can’t imagine their lives without a smart speaker.
- 62% of iPhone owners admit to using the voice assistant in their cars.
- The projection is that by 2022, voice search for shopping needs will have turned into a \$40 billion industry.

## SHARING THIS BOOK

*Sharing is caring, when done right.*

Thanks for downloading VoiceRank's 2021 Voice Search Playbook.

This book is free to you as a tool to improve your business's voice search presence. According to Google, voice search is the fastest-growing search method today. This book is important because small businesses have so much to deal with every day that it's hard to take time to learn new avenues and new channels to find new customers on an ongoing basis. We know you will get a ton of value from this book.

### **We want everyone to get value from this book!**

We encourage you to share this book with friends, colleagues, and other entrepreneurs that you're familiar with so they can benefit from these same best practices to optimize for voice search. That said, out of respect for the people that have spent so many hours writing this book and compiling this information, please do not email this book to those friends. Instead, so that we can provide the same great service and value that we have for you, please copy and paste the link below and send that to your friends. The reason for this is that just like you, they will now receive updated versions of this Playbook as the ecosystem of voice search evolves over the coming years.

Here is the link: <https://voicerank.agency/voice97/voice-search-playbook/>

**So yes, please share!** The big businesses have teams of people who are already optimizing for their companies. We want to help the small business owner, who's getting squeezed in today's economy, be able to rank number one on the fastest growing marketing channel in online search today.

## WHY WRITE THIS BOOK

The question has come up “Why write a guide about Voice Search Optimization?” and it’s a valid one. The problem that presents itself is that Voice Search is new, it’s changing, and the information in this book will become irrelevant, or even worse incorrect, over time. This is a concern whenever putting great effort into compiling something comprehensive. But the value of this book remains high because it is a *\*living\** work. It is constantly being updated.

*You see, this book was not written for you.*

This book was written for our employees, our team here at VoiceRank, as a guide to use when optimizing for voice search for our clients. This is the handbook our Campaign Managers use to do an awesome job for their customers every day. As the team learns and discovers, this book is updated. (So, make sure you are always reading the most recent version). Although we have decided to give small business owners access to this information, it was written as an ACTIONABLE GUIDE to getting small businesses to show up on Alexa, Google Home, Siri, etc.



So here you have the blueprint for getting your business on voice search and beating out your competition. Early adoption is such an important part of digital marketing because there are no second chances! You can’t go back in time and get more backlinks sooner, or start a social media campaign sooner, or start optimizing for voice-enabled devices when you should have.

This Playbook is now your secret weapon to get ranking on voice search and look like an optimization hero to your team and clients.

## EXPECTATIONS

In this Playbook you can expect to learn how to do the actions necessary to achieving top ranks for targeted key phrases on voice assistant devices.

We have worked to make this Playbook as versatile as possible, so that someone who has never done SEO before can have a place to begin their learning, and the experienced marketer will pull out the nuggets that they need to build an effective Voice Search Optimization (VSO) strategy.

This book should not be looked at as some get rich quick scheme where doing these steps will unlock thousands of new customers for your business. Now, it has the potential to do that, for sure. But this playbook is just that; it's a set of best practices and step-by-step guidelines, but it still primarily is a Playbook.

To win, you have to step on the field and play.

It's up to you to learn and master these steps so that as voice search evolves over the coming years, you will learn to understand what those changes mean for your VSO campaign, and adjust your plan with confidence.



## INTRODUCTION

If you've been doing SEO for years and have struggled to achieve top rankings for your major key words, you will really love this book. The principles in this book apply not only to voice search but to the greater SEO landscape as well. If you are accustomed to SEO, you'll notice many familiar ideas and processes in the following pages.

But there are some key differences that separate voice search from typical typed search, and those are the differences that will allow your company to rank above your competitors that are still doing the same SEO practices that they have been doing for many years.

This book was written with a focus on Wordpress as the content management system (CMS). Therefore, some of the tips, links, and recommendations may be somewhat different. But even if your website is hosted on a different CMS, the principles and strategies outlined under each topic will get you headed in the right direction to find a similar solution for your specific platform.

The Voice Search Playbook is organized into three sections: On-Page, Off-Page, and Ongoing Optimization.

Let's define these terms:

**On-Page Optimization:** Making changes to your website itself in technology, structure, or content to improve search engine rankings. Examples include site load speed, meta tags, internal linking, structured data, etc. Anything you do to your website with the intention to rank on the search engines is considered on-page optimization.

**Off-Page Optimization:** Work that takes place on other website properties that you do not own. This area of SEO contains an almost endless stream of ways to go about it. Some examples include link building, content marketing, and reputation management. Your off-page efforts have a large impact on how your visitors find your site.

**On-Going Optimization:** The third major aspect of any good SEO campaign is on-going work to rank for additional keywords, adjust efforts based on search engine changes, and stay ahead of your competition. Customers commonly ask why SEO is an ongoing thing? They think if their site is already optimized, why continue over time? The answer is the search engine itself. See, it's

always wanting the freshest, most relevant content to display at the top of it's results, and if you don't keep up with that, your website will quickly fall in the rankings. This final section requires repetition, it requires creativity, but mostly, it requires consistency.

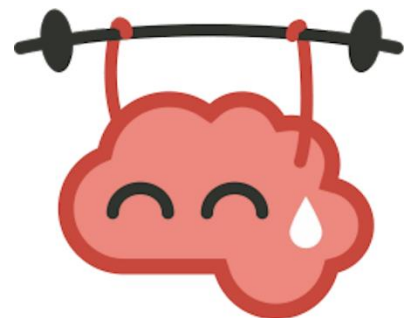
Although we will discuss Keyword selection as it pertains to Voice Search, it is assumed you already have a list of keywords you are targeting for your business. This list should be the key words / phrases that your ideal customer would use to find you on a search engine. If you do not have a keyword list yet, you can build one here. That general list will heavily influence the conversational key phrases you select for your voice search campaign.

[\(Set up your keyword list if you don't have one already\)](#)

### **WARNING: Some may find this book challenging to implement!**

One of the dangers with making this book available to everyone is that many may get confused or frustrated because this is not a book intended to teach SEO 101, or website coding. Some of the action items set forth in this book assume some experience in digital marketing and websites. (This is the Handbook we give our Marketing Managers to implement voice search for our clients). Some of the items require varying levels of understanding of HTML, CSS, and JavaScript.

Please understand that almost no one does ALL of the things recommended in the Playbook. Do what you can and don't get discouraged. If you need help, you can reach out any time. There are also hundreds of contractors out there willing to implement all of the things outlined in this book for you.



*Our service that does Voice Search Optimization for your business is called [Voice97](#).*



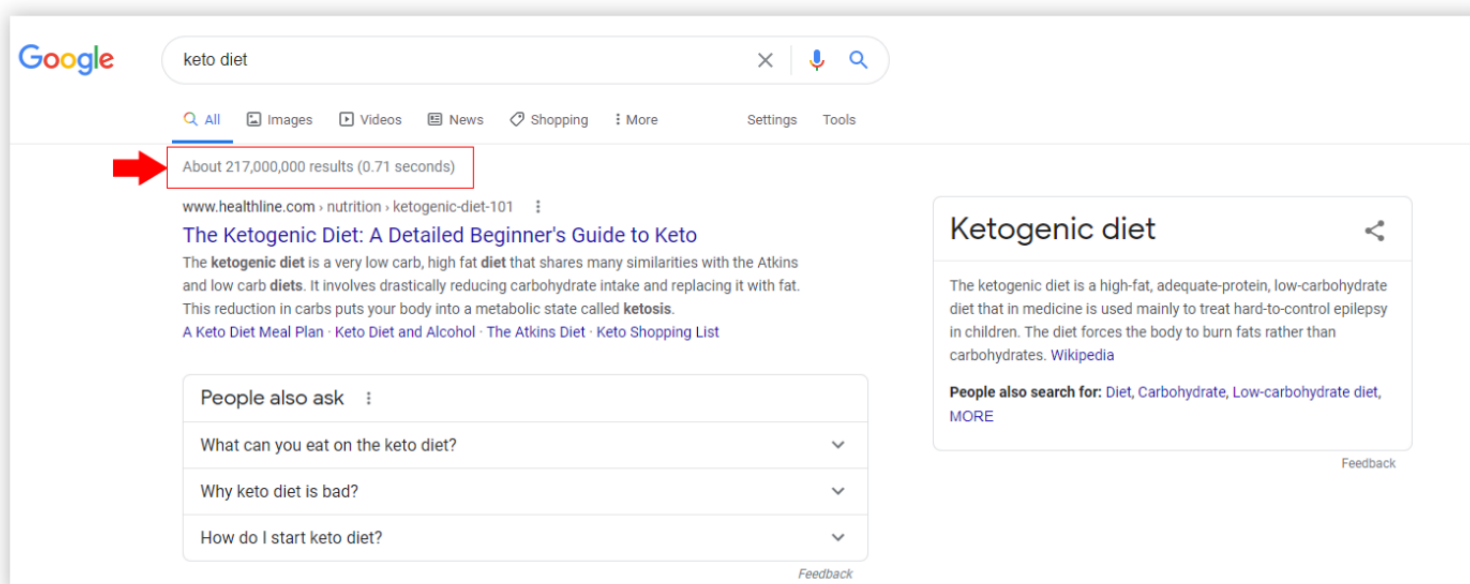
# SECTION 0: GETTING STARTED

## Authority and Relevance

Now, before we get into the details of how to get your business ranking, it's important to understand what our goal is from a top-level view. No matter what device, be it a PC, laptop, tablet, smartphone, car, or smart devices in your home, all of them have the same universal goal: to deliver a relevant result to the person asking the question. If the search engine can deliver a better (read: more relevant) search result to their users, those users will trust the search engine and will use it again in the future.

**Relevance** is how closely your content and message matches the query being posed to the search engine. It's important to understand that the old days of keyword stuffing are gone. The search engines can pick up on that and for better or worse, there is no good way to get around *just being real*. Being real means spending your time and money producing content that your customers and followers want to see. Content that builds value in their business, family, or their lives. So when producing content don't worry as much about getting the perfect keywords in there. The search engines are smart enough today to understand *what you mean* when you are posting content.

If you do a Google search right now, for anything, you will notice that it returned hundreds of thousands, if not millions of results for your query. You can see the number of results just below the search bar at the top, after you have begun a search.



What Google is saying, is that there are that many web pages that are **relevant** for that search query.

217 MILLION! WOW! That's a ton of pages!

How does Google know which one to rank #1, and which to rank #1,000,000? Because, they're all *relevant* for that query!

The other major factor, and how the search engines order all those websites, is Authority.

**Authority** is the value a web page has. The greater the value, the higher the ranking for keywords that the page is also relevant for. The search engines have hundreds of factors they take into consideration when selecting the most authoritative page for a search query. Some of the big ones are trust, frequency of updating, engagement, domain age, and the list goes on and on.

**So your goal is to make your website and it's pages, the most authoritative, and the most relevant for the key phrases you are targeting.**

The next section will help you with selecting the key phrases you will be targeting and tracking for Voice Search. Then we will dive into making your web pages the most relevant and the most authoritative for the key phrases you chose.

## Keyword Research

It's time to get to work on optimizing for voice search. Many of the optimization tactics covered in this book apply the broader spectrum of SEO, not just voice search. The phrase "keyword research" is the common phrase to refer to anything people type or speak into a search field on the internet.

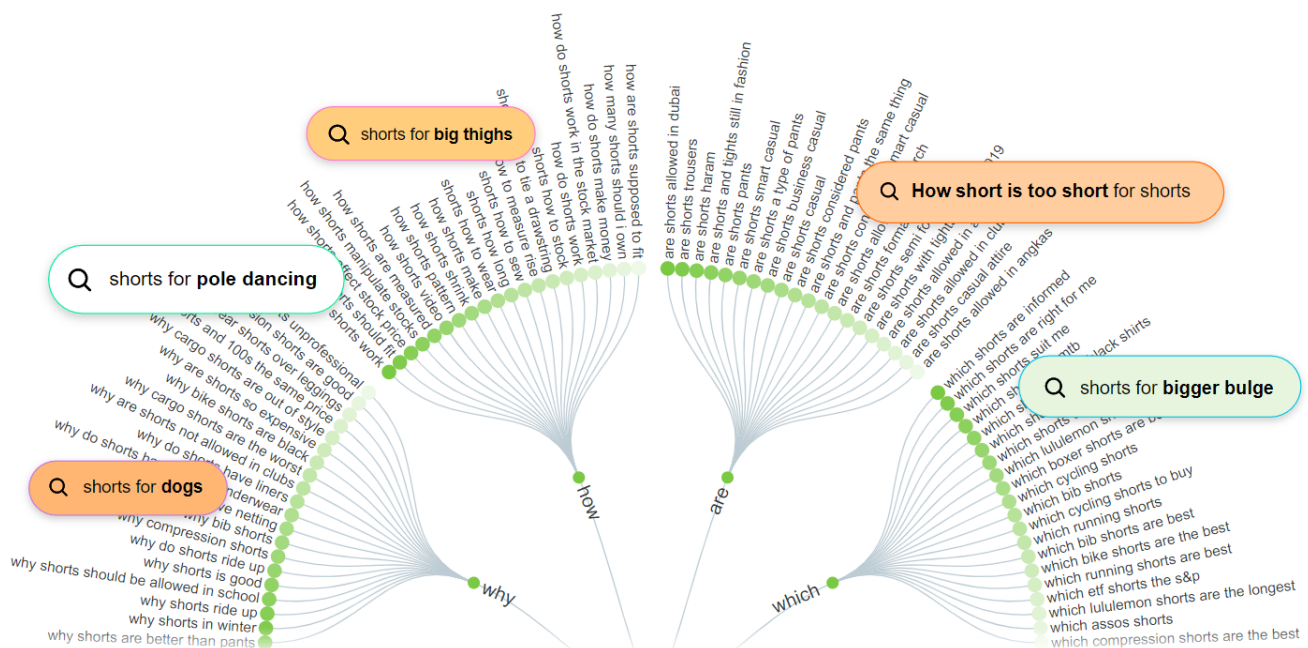
### A case of "Poe-tay-toe" / "Poe-taw-tow"

When was the last time you went on Google and type one key-word? No, you typed several words, more of a phrase. A phrase is a set of keywords, typically typed, that contains only the main words the user thinks will trigger the right response from the search engine.

In voice search, people don't just use key phrases, they use complete sentences. The user no longer stops to think about what words to use to get the results they want from the search engines, they simply ask for what they want as they would a human.

In this Playbook we use "keyword" and "keyphrase" to mean the same thing. Keyphrase however, is a bit more accurate in our opinion.

Keyword research is the baseline of all optimization efforts. Indeed, if we don't know the key phrases we are going after, how will we know what content to produce, what message to have, what medium to deliver it in, and if we have achieved our marketing goals.



There are many tools today to assist the marketer in researching keywords to target for a business. The main source for all keyword research is called the [Google Keyword Planner](#). In the planner you can type in a few words and find phrases that people are actually typing in the search that relate to your business. Then you can check things like the number of people who search a specific phrase, or demographic information. This planning tool is great in finding typed keyphrases that you can target.

But this will not help us in voice search, because none of the phrases are sentences. No one using voice search is chopping up their words as if they were typing. So we need a way to find a new set of keyphrases that are closer to full sentences than a handful of disconnected words.

Fortunately, some smart people have done just that: [Answer the Public](#)

Here you can type in your traditional key words, and it will tell you what people are asking about on that subject. Use these questions by connecting them to common questions you get from your customers. If the questions match that is a good keyphrase to target in your voice search optimization efforts.

Make sure to take care in putting together your keyphrase list. You will be spending a lot of time optimizing your website for it, so you want to make sure you are not wasting any energy on the wrong phrase.

## Section 1: ON-PAGE OPTIMIZATION RANKING FACTORS

*What is on-page optimization? Making changes to your website's code, speed, and usability with the intent to rank higher for targeted keywords.*

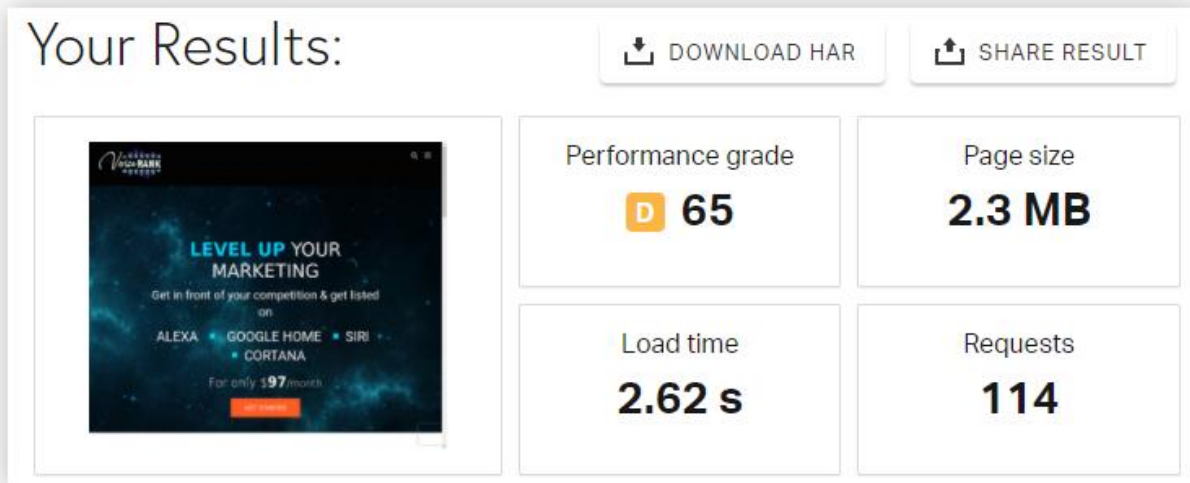
## Page load speed

Page load speed tracks how quickly your web page loads in milliseconds. It's an important metric to the search engines because the faster it can display information on the screen, the less chance there is that visitor will turn around and leave. The faster the load time, the quicker the visitor can start engaging with your content.

How many times have you clicked on a link on Google excited to see the page you just requested, and you see a spinning circle, or a \*loading\*, or worst of all, a white screen. You might wait a few seconds but that's about it. In those 3 seconds that feels like 3 years, your expectations are dashed and your excitement dwindles as you stare at the rotating icon on the screen. Then, you click the back button and go to the next search result.

This is a common experience we have all had, but have you ever stopped to think about what if that first website was optimized and loaded like the snappy site it should be? If the page had loaded quickly you would have stayed excited and probably made a purchase.

Today's modern Content Management Systems (CMS) like Wordpress, or Drupal, or Wix, make building a website visual and simple for most people. You don't even need to know how to code these days. Just log in to one of the common platforms, and you have an environment to build whatever you like. The issue with systems like is they produce bulky, unoptimized code. The more lines of code there are per page, the longer it takes to download that page. Every millisecond counts to the search engines.



Here are some things you can do to rev up your website load speeds:

**Benchmark your speed:** Visit these sites to get an idea of what your current load speed is. Both offer a sort of grade to tell you where you fall. There are also suggestions from Google to improve other factors for load speed.

[Google PageSpeed Insights](#) & [Pingdom Speed Test](#)

**Compress your site files:** Another way to make your site load faster is to reduce the amount of information downloaded by using a compression program. This compression will reduce the size of your images and files. [Gzip](#) is a great tool to shrink the size of your site so you get a nice bump on load speeds.

**Minify HTML, CSS, Javascript:** Removing unnecessary information or repeated information in your code files is another way to speed up your load times, especially when it comes to mobile viewing of your site. Google has recommendations on what to use to do this for your site.

- For your HTML – use [HTMLMimifier](#)
- For your CSS – use [CSSNano](#)
- For your JavaScript – use [Uglify JS](#)

**Be aware of Redirects:** When a website link is clicked, Google immediately starts to grab that page for the user. But if it hits the page and the instruction on that page is to go to a different web address, now Google has to go find a different page. This can take a lot of time!

There are many times in which using redirects is a smart move, heck even a required one, but be aware of how it is impacting your page load speeds. Just make sure “the juice is worth the squeeze”, as a wise man once said.

**Utilize browser caching:** The idea behind browser caching is that you can store things on your site that don't change often, like images, your web pages, stylesheets, so they only need to be downloaded to a user's device once. The second time they view your page it will load much faster. Caching is used on the server level all the way down to a personal computer or smartphone.

This can get a little technical for some. [Here is a resource](#) recommended by Google to improve your website's caching.

**Improve your server speed:** This has little to do with your code or anything on your site. It has everything to do with the company you're hosting your site with. Hosting companies like GoDaddy, HostGator, Amazon, etc. all have different service levels to host your website. A shared hosting solution is the least expensive, but it means you're sharing a server with potentially hundreds of other websites. It's a constant battle for the server's resources between all of the sites, which can hurt performance. The other option is a dedicated server, meaning your site is the only one on it. On top of that there are now cloud server systems that are built for enterprise level sites and are typically the fastest load speeds in the industry.

**Optimize your images:** We go over image optimization in it's own section, but because images are typically some of the largest files your visitor needs to download, it is important to keep them clean and crisp, while shedding some of the dead weight in the code. Make sure your images are the exact dimension as what is shown on the screen, meaning to not have a 1920x1080px image, and use it on your website as a 500x280px image. In this example, the visitor would need to download the full HD image

first and have it shrunk to the correct display resolution. That's a lot of extra info to download! More on this later.

## Domain Authority

Domain Authority is a score given to a website based on several factors. The main buckets that the scoring factors fall into are Trust and Authority. Basically your goal as it pertains to Domain Authority is to make your site the most trusted and authoritative for the key phrases you want to go after. A good way to tell immediately what your website's Domain Authority score is, is by installing this simple browser plugin (you can even see the scores of your competitors with it).

It's called [MozBar](#). Moz is one of the leading authority sites in the field of Digital Marketing.

This ranking factor is a 30,000 foot metric. It takes a ton of things into consideration and gives you one number. We look at this as a relative indicator, and a way to compare your website (in general) to your competition. The tips and action items in this Playbook will all help in getting a better Domain Authority score.

*Remember, you don't have to have the highest score possible, it just needs to be higher than your competitor.*

As Dr. Peter J. Meyers wrote regarding Domain Authority; *"Don't obsess over Domain Authority (DA) for its own sake. Domain Authority shines at comparing your overall authority (your aggregate link equity, for the most part) to other sites and determining where you can compete. Attract real links that drive traffic, and you'll improve both your Domain Authority and your rankings."*

Here are some other resources to help your understanding and give you some things you can do to improve your score:

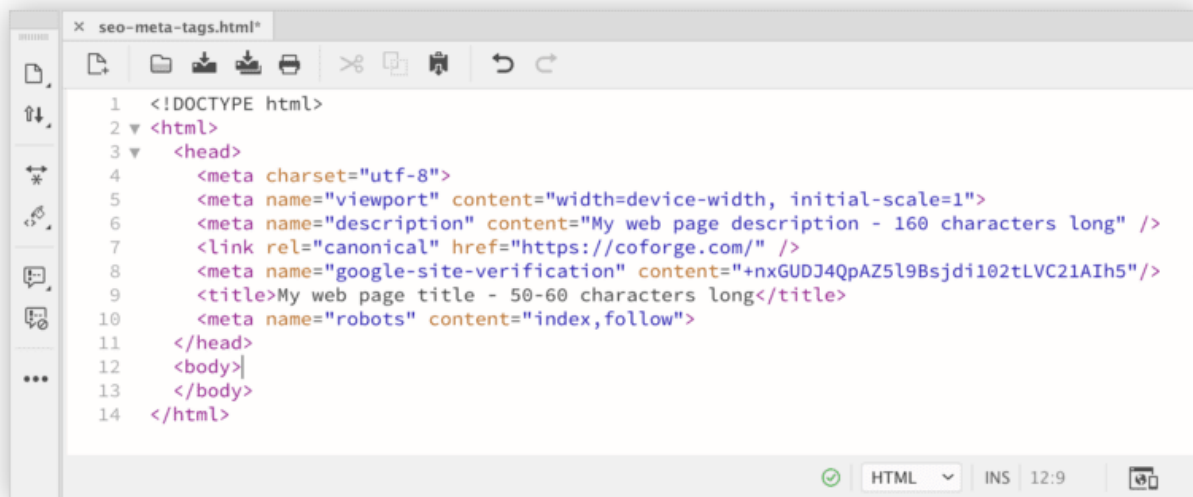
- [And 11 Other Questions About the Most Important Number In Your Marketing](#)
- [7 Practical Steps to Increase Your Website's Domain Authority](#)
- [How to Avoid Google Penalties Through Natural Link Building](#)

Finally, just like everything in the world of SEO, it takes time, so be patient. We always say the number one best practice in marketing is consistency.



## Meta Tags

Although meta tags were one of the original SEO ranking factors, they are still relevant today. Meta tags are in the code of each web page but not shown to the visitor. The Meta information is provided by the website for the search engines to understand what each individual page is all about.

A screenshot of a code editor window titled "seo-meta-tags.html". The editor displays HTML code for a page's head section. The code includes a DOCTYPE declaration, an opening <html> tag, and a <head> section. Inside the head, there are several meta tags: a charset="utf-8" tag, a viewport tag with content="width=device-width, initial-scale=1", a description tag with content="My web page description - 160 characters long", a canonical link tag with href="https://coforge.com/", a google-site-verification tag with a long alphanumeric content, a title tag with content="My web page title - 50-60 characters long", and a robots tag with content="index,follow". The head section is closed with </head>, followed by an empty body tag <body> and a closing </html> tag. The editor interface includes a toolbar at the top with icons for file operations and a status bar at the bottom showing "HTML" and "INS 12:9".

```
1 <!DOCTYPE html>
2 <html>
3 <head>
4   <meta charset="utf-8">
5   <meta name="viewport" content="width=device-width, initial-scale=1">
6   <meta name="description" content="My web page description - 160 characters long" />
7   <link rel="canonical" href="https://coforge.com/" />
8   <meta name="google-site-verification" content="+nxGUDJ4QpAZ5l9Bsjudi102tLVC21AIh5"/>
9   <title>My web page title - 50-60 characters long</title>
10  <meta name="robots" content="index,follow">
11 </head>
12 <body>|
13 </body>
14 </html>
```

In the early days of the search engines they relied heavily on meta tags to understand a website. As marketers realized that this is what the search engines were using to rank websites, meta tags quickly became abused and were used to rank for keywords that were not relevant to the website itself.

So back in the day meta tags may have accounted for a large percentage of a website's value, but as time has gone on that percentage has decreased.

There are many different types of Meta Tags that tell the search engines specific details about your site. Some of these tags matter to the search engines more than others. We recommend focusing on these Meta Tags:

- **Title Tags** – Should be descriptive of what the page is really about. Visitors will be able to see the title tag in the search results, as well as at the top of their browser on the tab. The Title Tag is extremely important because very often what you say there is the reason why someone clicks on your link.

- **Keyword Tags** – This is the Tag that was abused by so many back in the early days of SEO. Today adding Meta Keywords to your website will not make you jump to #1 on Google for that keyword immediately, but just like in life, if you don't ask for it, how will you get it? Meta Keywords tell the search engines which keywords your page is relevant for and which keywords you want to rank for. Use your keyword research to get your list and then add them to your Meta Keywords.
- **Description Tags** – The description is more for the user than the search engine. It is shown on a Google search under the title. This one sentence has a powerful influence over someone's decision to click on your site or the next one in the search result. Make sure your sentence is customer focused and creates curiosity so they will click on it.
- **Image Alt Tags** – Images have always been tough for the search engines because there is typically no text in them, and if the search engine cannot understand what an image is, it cannot index it correctly. Here you come to help the search engines out. Adding an Image <ALT> tag to every image on your site with a concise description of each image will help the search engines index your images correctly and give you a boost in the rankings as well. This becomes even more important with Voice Search because there may only be one image that is shown.
- **Schema Markup** – This is a more advanced form of meta data that tells the search engine specific things like your company hours, location, COVID-19 status, etc. We dive deeper into Schema Markup in it's own section below.

For more tips and other Meta Tags you can optimize for, check out this article:

[10 Most Important Meta Tags You Need to Know for SEO](#)

Although the search engine value of meta tags has decreased, it has not gone away. Updating meta tags is one of the simplest and fastest things anyone can do to their website to make it more relevant for their target keywords right away.

## Frequently Asked Questions

Frequently asked questions, or FAQs, is a great way to show up on Voice Search. This is not a typical SEO focus by itself, but as Google shifts to answering questions directly on the search results screen makes FAQs important. Why? Because that's where the information that Google is displaying is coming from.

But there are a few best practices when it comes to optimizing your FAQ page for Voice Search.

Make sure your questions are what people are actually asking. A good way to see this is to think of a common question you get from your customers and type it into Google. Then scroll all the way to the bottom of the page and you will see similar phrases or questions that people are searching for. You can then add those questions to your FAQ page and answer them.

When writing the answers to your FAQ questions, keep it short and sweet. The search engines are about efficiency, so be direct. The answer should be no more than a sentence or two and be in plain language.

The page that you have your FAQ questions on should be a simple page. Do not clutter it with other content. This will help the search engines understand clearly what you are intending with the page.

The screenshot shows a Google search for "how do i change a light bulb?". The search bar is at the top with the Google logo on the left and search, voice, and clear icons on the right. Below the search bar are navigation tabs for All, Videos, Shopping, Images, News, More, Settings, and Tools. A horizontal row of related search suggestions includes "oven", "Microwave oven", "stove", "Microwave", "Refrigerator", "dryer", "Kitchen hood", and "Freezer".

The featured snippet includes a row of five images illustrating the process of changing a light bulb. Below the images, the text reads: "Grasp the **bulb** lightly but firmly, push upwards gently and turn anticlockwise until it is released from the socket. ... **Keep gently twisting anticlockwise until the bulb comes loose from the socket.** 1. **Replace the bulb.** Insert a replacement **bulb** lightly but firmly into the socket. ... 2. Restore power. ... 3. Dispose of the old **bulb**." The date "Apr 12, 2017" and the source "www.homeserve.com · Home · Blog" are listed below the instructions. A link reads "How to change a light bulb | How-to videos, DIY, Lifestyle tips ...".

Below the featured snippet are links for "About featured snippets" and "Feedback".

The "People also ask" section contains four questions, each with a dropdown arrow:

- Do you need to be an electrician to change light bulbs?
- How do you get a light bulb out?
- Can changing a light bulb kill you?
- How do you remove a lightbulb from a recessed socket?

A "Feedback" link is located at the bottom right of the "People also ask" section.

## Image Optimization

Image Optimization is the act of minimizing the size of the file and making it easier to download so that a web page may pull up faster, thus increasing both search engine value, and user experience. This is a good example of a win-win when it comes to SEO. It's not always the case that an SEO tactic will be beneficial to you in search rankings AND user experience. The better the ranking, the more people will see your site and click on it. The better your load speed and experience for the user, the more likely they are to take action and engage with your business.

All of this becomes even more important when you consider voice search. In voice search there is only ONE result on the vast majority of voice enabled devices. This means you don't get seen for being number two. You have to push for number one.

There are a handful of main factors to focus on when optimizing your images. The three most important are here. This is a situation where we follow the 80/20 rule. Doing these three things will accomplish more than 80% of the image optimization you need:

1. **File Size** – Obviously we want the file size to be as small as possible. A lot of the time what happens is, you have a full size HD image, or one from a digital camera that is many times higher in resolution than a web browser can display. When that image is used on a website, the entire large image must be downloaded before the browser can render it to the much smaller size. To fix this, shrink your images to the exact size that they will be on your web page. This saves the server time in downloading because of the smaller size, and it also saves processing power in that it does not need to resize the image.

Here are some programs that will shrink your images for you:

- Wordpress (plugins): [SMUSH](#) -- [TinyPNG Compress](#) -- [ShortPixel Image Optimizer](#)
- Other CMS (not plugins): [Imagify](#) -- [Image Compressor](#)

2. **Text in Images & <ALT> Tags** – A common way that images hurt the authority of a website is when text is embedded inside of an image. The search engines cannot read the image and do not know that there's text. This can create a problem because typically when someone is using an image with text, that text contains primary key phrases that are relevant to that business. The right way to do it, is to save the image itself and have your web programmer code the text as

actual text over the image. This way the search engines can read the text and understand the relevance of the page.

Another way to help the search engines understand what the image is by using an HTML <ALT> tag. The <ALT> tag is a short description of what that image is. This is a great place to insert key phrases that you want to tell the search engines your page is relevant for.

Deep Dive: [Moz Guide to Alt Text](#)

3. **Mobile Image Optimization** – It should go without saying that special consideration needs to be provided when it comes to images displayed on mobile devices. Because of the variety of sizes and screen resolutions of mobile devices these days, it's extremely difficult to optimize for every device and have your webpage look the way you want it to on every different screen. Because more than 50% of searches happen via mobile, and even higher percentage of voice searches happen via mobile, it's important to focus on the content. Your philosophy should be a picture is worth a thousand words when it comes to displaying an image on a mobile device. Make sure to remove all extra, or fluffy images. Your purpose on mobile is to deliver your message in as clear a way as possible.

Recommended Wordpress Plugin: [Yoast SEO](#)

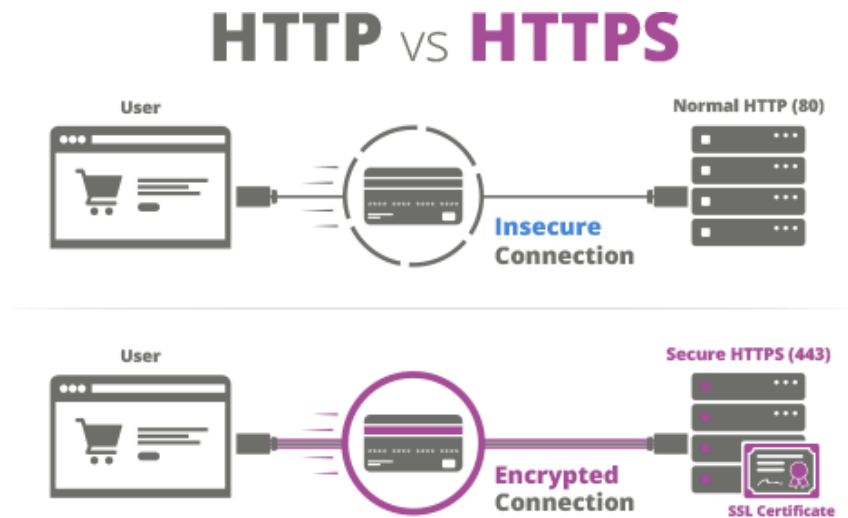
Other resources for further image optimization:

- [Google Images Best Practices](#)
- [Image SEO: Optimizing images for search engines](#)
- [How to Optimize Images for Web and Performance](#)

## SSL

SSL stands for *Secure Sockets Layer* and it is a set of protocols for authenticating and encrypting communication between two devices across a network.

Even if your website does not take credit cards or capture people's personal information, securing your website is a high priority to the search engines. Securing your site SLL adds trust for your visitors on the page; that their information will be protected, but it has a huge influence on how the search engines view your page as well.



**Google is now penalizing sites that do not have SSL** and display the https, showing that the site is secure.

Typically your hosting provider will have the best and easiest options to secure your site with SSL. Fortunately this has become a common thing for all websites, even those that are not ecommerce sites, to request an SSL certificate. Check with your hosting provider (e.g. [Godaddy](#), [HostGator](#), etc.) to see what the cost is, or you can get one free with a little more work. Here are some resources to help you get your site secured with SSL:

- [Google: Learn how to use HTTPS on your domain](#)
- [How to Get an SSL Certificate \[+10 Best Free SSLs\]](#)

**FACT:** 70.4% of Google Home result pages use a secure connection (https)

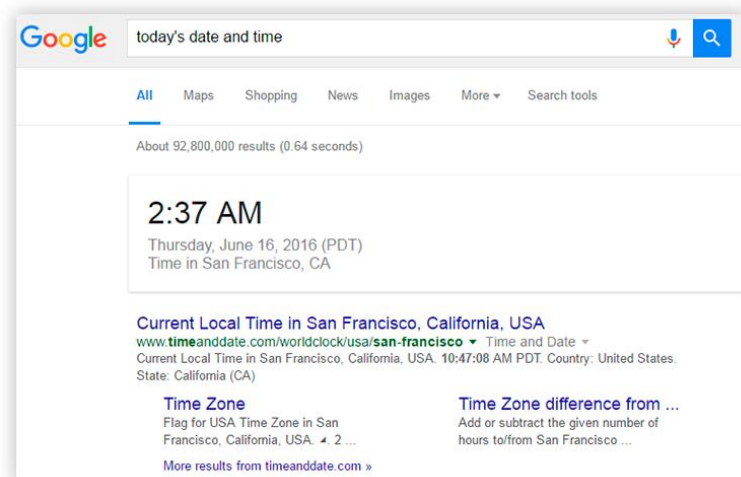


## Rich Snippets

A Rich Snippet is a search result where the search engine takes content from a website (we want it to be yours!) and displays it at the top of the results, thus giving the user the answer to their query without the user having to click into a specific website.

**FACT:** Over 40% of all voice search answers currently come from a featured / rich snippet.

The Featured Snippet is a Rich Snippet that is displayed **above** the #1 position in a search result. We call this “Position 0”, and this is where Google looks when someone does a voice search. That is why it is very important to focus on. If only one result is going to be displayed in a voice search, you want to be at that Position 0 and engage with the visitor.



Resources:

- [Rich Snippets Wordpress Plugin](#)
- [How to add Rich Snippets to WordPress in 2 Minutes – The Secret Sauce](#)

## Mobile Optimization

Making sure that your website is optimized for mobile devices is essential these days. In fact, it's possible that how your website appears on a phone or tablet is more important than how it's viewed on the desktop. The issue today is that there are so many different mobile platforms, all with different screen sizes and capabilities. Making sure your website looks good on these devices is essential for long term success, especially as consumers move to voice search more and more. Voice Assistant devices, if they have a screen, are essentially a tablet with limited functions. They behave the same way and return the same results. So how do you optimize your site for mobile? Here are some pro tips:

1. **Focus on Content** – People viewing your webpage on a mobile device typically will not read as much compared to sitting in front of a computer. This means you need to make your message clear and easy to understand. Mobile users are normally looking for a specific thing or piece of information, and the better your site is at delivering that quickly, the more people will buy what you are selling. Make sure to put the most important information at the top of the page so the viewer does not have to scroll. You don't want your visitors hunting for what they're looking for; it's our job to understand our customer's needs and satisfy them as simply as possible.

When was the last time you looked at your website on your own mobile device? When was the last time you scrolled through and clicked every link? Make sure you have a good experience on your site! If you don't, there is no way a visitor will.

**Deep Dive:** [Google Leaders Share How to Improve the Mobile Experience](#)

2. **Optimize Images and Load Speed** – As we talked about earlier, page load speed is a major ranking factor both on desktop and mobile. Because there are less resources on mobile, both in terms of bandwidth and screen real estate, you need to be very intentional with which images you choose to show on the mobile version of your site. We recommend optimizing your images by reducing the file size (see above for details on how to do this), and only displaying images that add immense value to the clarity of the message.
3. **Video is Gold** – More and more content today comes in the form of video. If we look at Social Media sites like Facebook and Instagram, videos are becoming more and more common, and are



replacing still images as the thing that gets us to stop scrolling and take notice. Video is powerful because it's engaging and can deliver a lot of information quickly.

For most small businesses though, creating video content feels like a daunting task, one that most people would feel immediately overwhelmed to start and have no idea where to begin. There are a lot of great resources out there to help you start making video content and we've broken them down for you here.

When creating your first few pieces of video content, there are some easy-to-make videos that will have the greatest impact on your business.

1. **Business Explainer Video:** Tell your audience about you and your business. Make it real and relatable. Avoid making things too polished, the idea here is for people to connect with you so they will listen to your message.

2. **Customer Testimonial Video:** Ask your favorite customers to sit down and talk about their experience working with you. Film on your phone and use the footage to make a testimonial video you can place on your website. Have some questions prepared before the camera starts rolling. It will make your customer more at ease if they don't have to come up with what to say on the spot. If you ask them questions, they will answer naturally and it will be seen as genuine to the viewer.

3. **Highlight a Service Video:** A great way to let people see and hear your product or service is to make a short video explaining what it is and how it benefits your customers. Share these videos on your social channels and encourage past customers to like, comment, and share these videos with their friends. When they do this, they are essentially giving you a referral to their friends, and that trust will increase your chances of more sales over time.

4. **How to Video:** "How to..." is the start of thousands of searches every day. Having some "how to" video content will provide value to your viewers, but more importantly, it will create the idea in the viewer's mind that you are the expert. Being seen as the expert in your field adds to your

trust level with customers as well as adds authority to your site in the eyes of the search engines.

4. **Test it!** – This step is simple and often overlooked. Make sure you are testing your website’s performance on as many devices as possible. Now, you probably don’t have too many different types of devices yourself, but your friends and family do. After you have optimized your website following this Playbook, you can go to anyone (who has a device you have not seen your website on yet), ask them if they could help you by pulling up your web page on their device. This generates a of bit gorilla marketing, as the person does not know they are being marketed to, and it also allows you to see how your site looks on a new device. You can also observe how the person reacts to it in real time. There is no better education on how your website is perceived than watching someone go through it for the first time.

A great tool to see how your customers interact with your website: check out [Hotjar](#).

Resources:

- [Google Mobile Friendly Test](#)
- [Cross Browser Testing](#)
- [Improving the User Experience on Mobile](#)

## Section 2: OFF-PAGE OPTIMIZATION RANKING FACTORS



There are literally hundreds of things you can do away from your website to build its value, and there are tons of great guides on how to build a winning strategy. However, many of those strategies pertain to the broader field of SEO. In this Playbook we will assume you are doing those typical SEO activities to get your website ranking. We will only focus on the off-page ranking factors that are not typically part of an SEO strategy.

If you are new to SEO, here are a few resources to help you:

- [From Moz: The Beginner's Guide to SEO](#)
- [Google's 200 Ranking Factors: The Complete List \(2021\)](#)
- [The 12 Most Important SEO Ranking Factors](#)

### Google My Business Page

If you have a business, you have a Google Business page. The only question is, have you claimed it?

If the answer is No, or I don't know, here are the basic steps:

1. On your computer, open Google Maps.
2. In the search bar, enter the business name.
3. Click the business name and choose the correct one.
4. Click Claim this business. Manage now. ...
5. Select a verification option and follow the on-screen steps.



Deep dive on how to get yours here: [Add or claim your business on Google My Business](#).

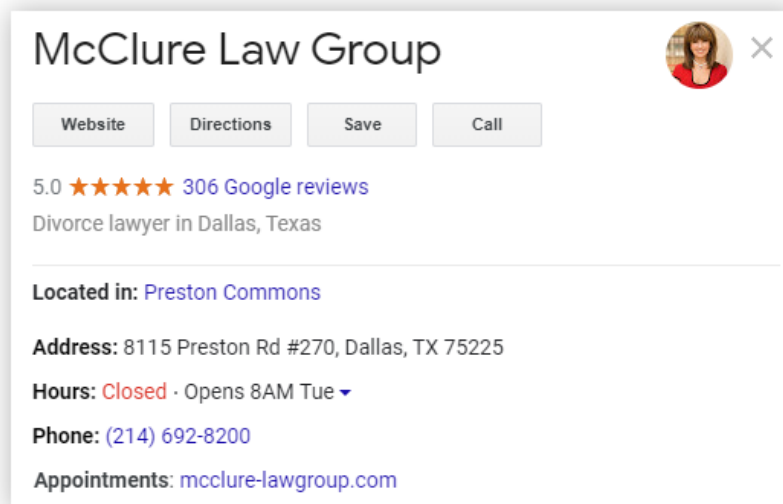
Now that you have secured your primary Google property, you want to make sure it is 100% filled out. Even if a field is not relevant to your business, it's recommended you put something in every field. The

more information you provide in GMB (Google My Business) the better chance you have of ranking in your local listings.

### Voice search prioritizes local results far above other results.

In order to show up at the top of the local results you need to have your GMB listing filled out completely. The language in your listing should match the language on your website, and make sure to include all types of media in the media section. Pulling a video from Youtube, an image from your website, and pictures of your office or storefront are always a good idea to have on your Google My Business listing.

The other major ranking factor for your GMB listing is reviews. The more reviews you have, the better. We recommend developing a system within your organization to solicit, capture, and market your customer reviews. This one factor can mean the difference between a stream of customers from voice search and mobile, or the sound of crickets as you wait for the phone to ring.



Resources:

- [Tips from Google on getting reviews](#)
- [Get More Google Business Reviews With These 16 Tried & True Tactics](#)

## Yelp Profile

Although Yelp is not as relevant today in traditional SEO, it is still a big deal when it comes to voice search results. Some Voice Assistants use Yelp for business information and reviews. This information then influences a website's voice search ranking. Therefore we need to have a Yelp profile in order to get the benefit of the voice search ranking boost.

Make sure that your Yelp profile is filled out completely. And we do recommend getting a few reviews on this platform. However, do not put all of your eggs in the Yelp basket. We do not expect Yelp to be a large ranking factor in the future, so get your profile set up and then see about getting 3 reviews.

Yelp has a reputation for having a "pay-to-play" model where they will penalize listings that are only using their free version, and not paying them for boosted listings or advertising. You do NOT need to buy anything from Yelp to rank on voice search.

### **WARNING: Do not cannibalize your testimonials and reviews!**

Reviews can be difficult to get. First you have to get a customer to agree to do it, and then get them to follow through. It can be a challenge. One of the common questions we get when consulting on reviews, is where should the business have their customer leave the review? On Google? Yelp? Facebook? Their website? Most customers will not take the time to go to all of the review sites and craft unique messages, so it's up to you to manage your reviews and have them go where they will give you the most bang for your buck. For us at VoiceRank, that is Google. The vast majority of the reviews we help our customers get from their clients go to Google. And if you are wanting to rank for voice search, you will want to do the same.

Resources:

- [Yelp.com](https://www.yelp.com)

## Apple Maps & Bing Places

Just like Google, it is important to have your business listed, with 100% complete information, on Apple and Bing. Siri pulls information from Apple Maps, and Cortana gets some of it's information from Bing Places.

To get set up on Apple so your business will show up on Siri, you will need an [Apple Maps Connect](#) account. You can log in with your Apple ID. Please note, Apple is currently only accepting businesses that have a physical address where customers can visit them. You can also set it up for multiple locations if you run a chain of stores.



Bing Places is similar to Google My Business. In fact, when you go to Bing Places for Business, you will have the option to import your Google Business information directly into your Bing account. You will still want to [get verified](#) so that you can show up on Voice Search.

Resources:

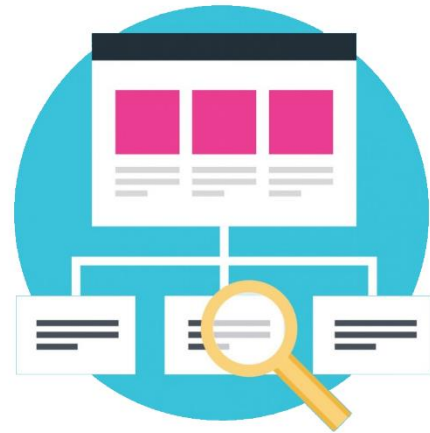
- [Bing: Approve and Verify Your Listing](#)
- [Bing Places Android App](#)

## Sitemap Submitted to Google

A sitemap is a list of all the pages on your website. It helps the search engine crawlers understand the structure of your website and better understand what your site is relevant for.

There are two places you want to have a sitemap. One is on your website itself, and the other is with Google.

To get a sitemap on your website, use the resources below based on if you are using WordPress or another platform, and upload it to your hosting in the root of your web server. With a sitemap in place, any search engine who comes to your site will have access to a roadmap of every page on your site. Essentially this is a rare opportunity for you to influence how the search engines interact with your website.



The other very important place you need to submit your sitemap is to Google itself. This can be done through the Google Search Console. If you don't have your Search Console account set up yet, [click here to get started](#). Once you're in the Console, you will have the option to type the URL location of your sitemap on your website. This ties your website to your Search Console account and gives you some control over how often Google crawls your site and some other statistics.

For Wordpress: [Google Sitemap Plugin](#) -- [SEO Yoast](#)

For Other Content Management Systems: [XML Sitemaps](#)

## Section 3: On-going Optimization

### Reputation & Reviews

Earlier in Section 2, we talked about reviews and how important they are for your business. There are many platforms where folks can post their reviews about your business. Your job is to encourage reviews on an ongoing basis and control the reviews by focusing your customers to leave reviews on a specific channel.



**Google is the number one place every business should be soliciting reviews for.**

Reputation is something that is not as straightforward but is equally as important. As business owners we know that it is very hard to get a happy customer to leave a review, but an angry customer will go out of their way to find your Google page and leave that one-star mark. It's bound to happen. So, when it does don't panic. Don't attempt to delete the bad review (you can't) and don't ignore it! Instead respond publicly on the same platform and no matter what apologize and offer them something that will satisfy them. Much of the time it's as simple as a phone call from you. Now that that customer is appeased, you have turned a negative into a positive.

How? Because now every time a potential customer is going through your reviews (looking for the bad ones), they will see the scathing review, but they will also see a quick, polite, and humble response from the company. Consumers know that no business can make every customer happy, but they are 10 times more likely to do business with you if they believe you handle difficult situations in a good way.



## Content Marketing

Another way to keep up with your customers is to run a content marketing campaign. This involves a consistent schedule of planned content that your company would release. Since the search engines value new content, continually producing it will show them that you are active in your business and online. It has the added benefit of adding value to the reader / viewer as well.

There are three types of content that work well:

1. Writing a blog
2. Hosting a video series
3. Hosting a podcast

Depending on which medium you are most comfortable with, you should find a popular site outside of your own website to post your content regularly. Then we recommend linking to it on your website, sharing it over your social channels, and including it in your email newsletter.

Content marketing also places you in a position of authority. Every time you post a blog or a video about a frequently asked question, or debunking myths in your industry, you are setting yourself up as the expert in your space. Your audience will see you as the best, clear choice when they are in need of your product or services.

## Conclusion

We hope you have received great value from this book and it has given you some new ideas on how to rank for voice search. Although this Playbook has been modified with extra content and links, the information here is the same information pulled directly from our internal Handbook on voice search. Every Campaign Manager follows these same steps to achieve top results for our clients.

One thing is for certain: digital marketing, the search engines, and voice search will all continue to evolve... and so will we.

We will notify you when there are major changes to the Playbook so you can always have the latest version on hand.

With all of the craziness happening in the world today, we hope you and your family stay safe and healthy. God Bless.

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If you have questions about anything covered in this book, or anything related to Digital Marketing, please reach out. We would love to connect.

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