

FIVE THINGS TO KNOW

Search Engine Optimization (SEO)

Search engine optimization (SEO) should be part of your small-business digital marketing strategy. After all, your customers and prospects spend most of their lives online. You need to make your site more likely to pop up in the search results of the search engines you choose (Google, Yahoo!, etc.).

SEO, also called organic search, is about tweaking the keywords and other words on your web pages to ensure your business will appear near the top of browsers' search results. Here are five things to know about SEO:

- 1. IT'S ABOUT CAPTURING ATTENTION.** SEO helps to build online awareness of your brand. SEO is the process of generating traffic to your site from the free, natural search results on search engines like Google and Yahoo!. Search engines are the entry point to the Internet and search data provides invaluable clues about your customer or prospect's intent. Someone searching for "financing for refrigerator purchase" is likely ready to buy.
- 2. SEO IS NATURAL, NOT PAID, SEARCH.** SEO is different from search engine marketing (SEM) or paid search. SEM is the process of gaining website traffic by purchasing ads on search engines. SEO is the process of optimizing your brand's web presence using both on- and off-page practices to ensure placement and ranking on search engines. Most small business owners do their own SEO.
- 3. KEYWORDS ARE KEY.** Keywords are the ideas and topics that define what your content is about. These are the words and phrases that searchers enter into search engines. For example, someone redecorating their home might search for a term like "choose a paint color" or "buy living room furniture."

With SEO, your main job is to boil down your web content to a few simple words and phrases. Those are your primary keywords. Then, you mark your keywords with HTML tags on your site to increase the likelihood they will be picked up in browsers' search results. You can easily learn how to do this online. Just search "how to mark keywords with HTML tags." It is crucial your keywords match what people are searching for.

- 4. MANAGING YOUR KEYWORDS TAKES WORK.** It takes ongoing work to select and manage your keywords, but this work pays off. Use single word or multi-word phrases but not a complete sentence. Make sure to align your keyword with a call to action that makes sense for generating leads. An example: "Store credit card."



Being ranked number one for a non-relevant or rarely searched term is much less useful than a number-ten ranking for the right keyword. Make sure your URLs also contain keywords. And use title tags that describe the content on each of your web pages that accurately reflect the content on the page and coordinate with keywords. You can learn to do all these things with a simple online search.

- 5. GO FOR READABILITY.** A truth of SEO: If your content is clear and easy to read, you are going to appear in more searches. Use heading, bold text and bullets to make your content quick to scan and simple to digest. Make sentences short and concise. Include off-page external links where appropriate to build credibility. The more external links your page contains, the higher its ranking will be in natural search.

Bottom line: SEO is about ensuring your brand and solutions are easily accessible to search engines, and that your online campaigns are finely tuned to pop up in as many search results as possible. This could translate into more customers and more sales.

For more information or to connect with an expert, contact us at synchronyconnect@synchrony.com.

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