



# 11 SEO Myths

## Let's Improve Your Online Strategy



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## Introduction

“To say SEO has ‘changed a lot’ would be the understatement of the decade. Just take a look at how Google’s Panda and Penguin algorithm updates shook the world of SEO professionals – marketers and SEO agencies worldwide halted their link-building and keyword-obsessed ways and swapped them for a long overdue focus on quality content.

But does that mean an SEO’s job is just to pump out high-quality, keyword- optimized content? Far from it. In fact, SEO has changed so much in the last few years that many marketers aren’t sure what’s outdated, what’s important, what will actually move the needle, and what’s simply wasted effort.

This guide is going to point out all of the most common myths and assumptions about how SEO works and debunk them for you, so you’re not wasting a single moment on things that simply don’t matter for SEO in your marketing strategy.”



Anneka Hicks  
Director – Sherpa Marketing



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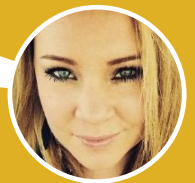
## "I must submit my site to Google"

The idea that you need to submit your website to Google in order to appear in search results (or rank) is nonsense.

While a brand new site can submit its URL to Google directly, a search engine like Google can still find your site without you submitting it.

And remember, a submission does not guarantee anything. Crawlers will find your site and index it in due time, so don't worry about this idea of needing to "tell" Google about your site.

*"Pay more attention to what you want to block from Google by checking out your robots.txt file. Certain directories and pages, such as internal search results should be kept out of Google's search index so that your real content takes the lead."*



## "More links are better than more content"

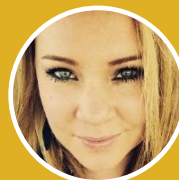
Too often, businesses tend to focus on the quantity of links rather than their quality - but linking is not a numbers game anymore (far from it, actually).

The best thing you can do is focus on having relevant and diverse sources that link to relevant pages.

Now - more so than ever since the release of Panda, Penguin and Hummingbird algorithms - when you invest in content, that content can be used for webpages, blog posts, lead generation offers, and guest posts on other sites - all content types that will bring more links with them over time.

*"While link-building done correctly is still valuable, creating extraordinary content has become non-negotiable."*

*Remember - If you're investing in your website, it always needs to come down to; Quality over Quantity."*



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## “HTTPS will not improve my SEO”

HTTP (HyperText Transfer Protocol), facilitates communication over computer networks. Whereas HTTPS, (HTTP Secure), provides the same functionality, only it has the benefit of an added layer of security called SSL/TLS.

Although HTTPS remains a “lightweight” signal, affecting fewer than 1% of global queries, in August of 2014, Google announced that it had started using HTTPS as a signal in their ranking algorithms, which means if your website still relies on standard HTTP, your rankings could suffer as a result.

It's clear that Google wants everyone to move over to the more secure HTTPS protocol, but don't freak out if you haven't done it yet. There are more important factors that Google is looking at, such as the presence of high-quality content.

*“We love Hubspot's Page performance tool which tells you everything you need to know about the SEO of any given page, blog post, or landing page on your site, pointing out where you have major issues or minor fixes. It's also great at reporting on the keywords you're using and how they perform across your site.”*



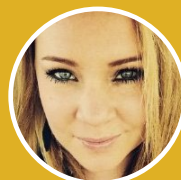
## “It's all about ranking”

While there's a strong correlation between search results placement and clickthrough rates, ranking is not what it used to be.

Studies of clickthrough rates and user behavior have shown that searchers generally favour the top three search results. However, it's also been shown that on subsequent pages, being listed toward the top of the page shows similar click behavior. And with search results now being appended with rich text/snippets, results that appear below the top-three search results are getting much higher clickthrough rates.

Even before all of that was applied, rankings did not guarantee success. Theoretically, you could rank quite well for a term, get plenty of traffic, and not make a penny from it.

*“The best question to ask yourself here is 'What do you want to rank for?'. There are plenty of ads online that guarantee to get you to #1 on Google, but will it be for what you expect? Try not obsess too much about ranking, but instead focus on useful content that your readers and customers will love.”*





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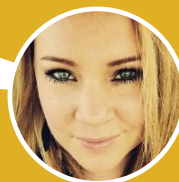
## “Search rankings are affected by Meta Descriptions”

Meta Descriptions are the HTML attributes that concisely explain the contents of your webpage, commonly used as preview snippets in search results.

You would assume that Google's algorithms would take this into account, but surprisingly not. They announced back in 2009 that meta descriptions and meta keywords have no bearing on search rankings. But that doesn't mean it's not important for SEO.

A good meta description can set you apart from your competitors and can be the difference between a searcher clicking through to your site and one who goes elsewhere.

*“Although the placement in search results is unaffected, we recommend using at least one key word in your meta description, not because it will help with ranking, but because it will show up as bold if it matches a person's search term. Try adding a call to action to your description where you can too.”*



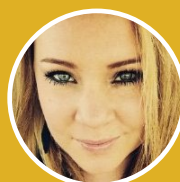
## “SEO should be left to the IT dept”

There seems to be a perception that SEO requires some technical expertise, and since it is technical, IT can just do the work.

While there is a technical component to SEO, it requires way more than just technical chops, you should think long and hard before handing an entire project to your IT or web designer.

While many IT professionals are adept in many technical areas - for instance, making sure your website is crawlable and setting up redirects and XML sitemap files - just remember that many IT personnel also work on things like setting up printers, which is ... well ... a different skill set than what's needed to effectively run an SEO strategy!

*“SEO isn't an acronym that belongs in the hands of technoids with HTML street cred... It's a key part of the responsibility of creating excellent content. Do that first, work on it until it reads well, and then use a tool like Hubspot to ensure it also scores correctly.”*



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## “Keywords need to be an exact match”

Keywords do not need to be repeated verbatim throughout a piece of content. In a headline, in particular, you want to use a keyword (or keywords) in a way that makes the most sense to your audience.

The goal should be to write a stellar headline (somewhere between 4-9 words) that clearly explains what a piece of content is about.

Don't waste your time trying to find the perfect couple of keywords to use on your site repeatedly. First of all, Google hates it when you over-optimize for machines. Secondly, searches will use a vast mix of words and phrases to find what they're looking for. The content on your site should be varied enough to meet that search criteria while still sticking to one overarching theme.

*“Nothing is more annoying than having an awkward headline built around the use of one keyword phrase, or worse, one that forcibly repeats a keyword phrase.”*

*The goal should always be about informing the reader, not informing the search engines.”*



## “The H1 tag is the most important”

Think of the content structure on your webpage as an outline. It's a tiered approach to presenting information to users and search engines. What title tag your headline is wrapped in has little to no influence on your overall SEO - that title tag (whether it's an H1, H2, H3, etc.) is only used for styling purposes.

The H1 is part of your CSS (custom style sheet) that a designer puts together to reference what font styling and size will be applied to a particular piece of content. This used to be more important, but search engines are smarter these days, and - unfortunately - people spammed this to death.

Google hates it when you over-optimize for machines. Secondly, searches will use a vast mix of words and phrases to find what they're looking for. The content on your site should be varied enough to meet that search criteria while still sticking to one overarching theme.

*“It really doesn't matter what header tag you use, as long as you present your most important concepts upfront and closer to the top of the page. Remember, you're optimizing your page for users first and foremost, which means that you want to tell them ASAP what your page is about through a clear headline.”*



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## “My homepage needs the most content”

Think of your homepage as the gateway to your business. This is your chance to make a first impression and convey what you're all about. Maybe your value proposition is simplicity - in that case, just a single login makes sense (especially if your name is Dropbox).

For most marketers, however, there is a need for a bit more content and context than that. Your homepage content should be long enough to clarify who you are, what you do, where you're located (if you're local), your value proposition, and what visitors should do next. These visitors should leave satisfied, not overwhelmed or underwhelmed - and certainly not confused.

*“Make your homepage about your customers...”*

*Communicate with them and tell your story. Why are they here and what can they find? Keep it simple, try not to overthink the SEO. Drive home the message – what value do you provide to the visitor?”*



## “SEO won't improve conversions”

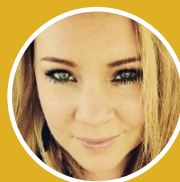
SEO has evolved from simply getting found to improving how users engage with your content. SEO is so much more than optimising for search engines. You need to optimize for users first and foremost, so they actually click through your listing to your website and - once they click through - stay there.

To keep visitors on your site, ensure you're publishing content that's personalized and relevant. You should also make sure your website is intuitive and easy to browse (in other words, accessible by both crawlers and users).

Also, don't make visitors look for what they need. Provide clear calls-to-action, and you'll convert those visitors into contacts, leads, and - eventually - customers.

*“‘Search experience optimisation’ is what SEO should really stand for.*

*Always try to remember – don't optimise content for search engines only, it makes it hard to digest as a human!”*



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## “SEO doesn't help with inbound”

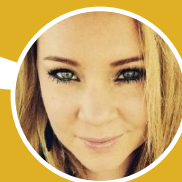
On the contrary. SEO is one of the many opportunities you have to reach customers, and it is inbound because those customers find you searching for solutions to their problems.

Inbound is a holistic philosophy that focuses on efficiently turning strangers into people who want to - and should - do business with you. This encompasses a wide array of tactics and best practices, including content creation, conversion optimisation, and leveraging social channels, among other facets.

SEO, in comparison, is a specific marketing tactic that focuses on improving a business's visibility in - and traffic from - search engine results. Clearly, SEO can help you immensely with your inbound marketing. When we think about the four stages of the inbound methodology -- Attract, Convert, Close, and Delight -- SEO is especially relevant when it comes to that first stage: attracting the right people to your site.

*“Try to think about integrating all facets of inbound to make it as easy as possible for customers to find you.*

*Then, get to work creating great content and dialogue that's needed to solve their problems.”*



## Conclusion

“Now that you know what the common SEO myths are, what are you doing that isn't moving the needle?

Or worse, what are you doing that's making your SEO efforts worse?

Understanding these SEO truths will make you both more effective and more efficient with your organic search strategy.

More than anything else, SEO is about the overall experience for a searcher, and that experience starts the moment they enter a search query.

The better their experience with you - from your SERP listing, to the quality and relevancy of the content on your site, to the ease with which they can move through your site - the better your SEO will be, too.”



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