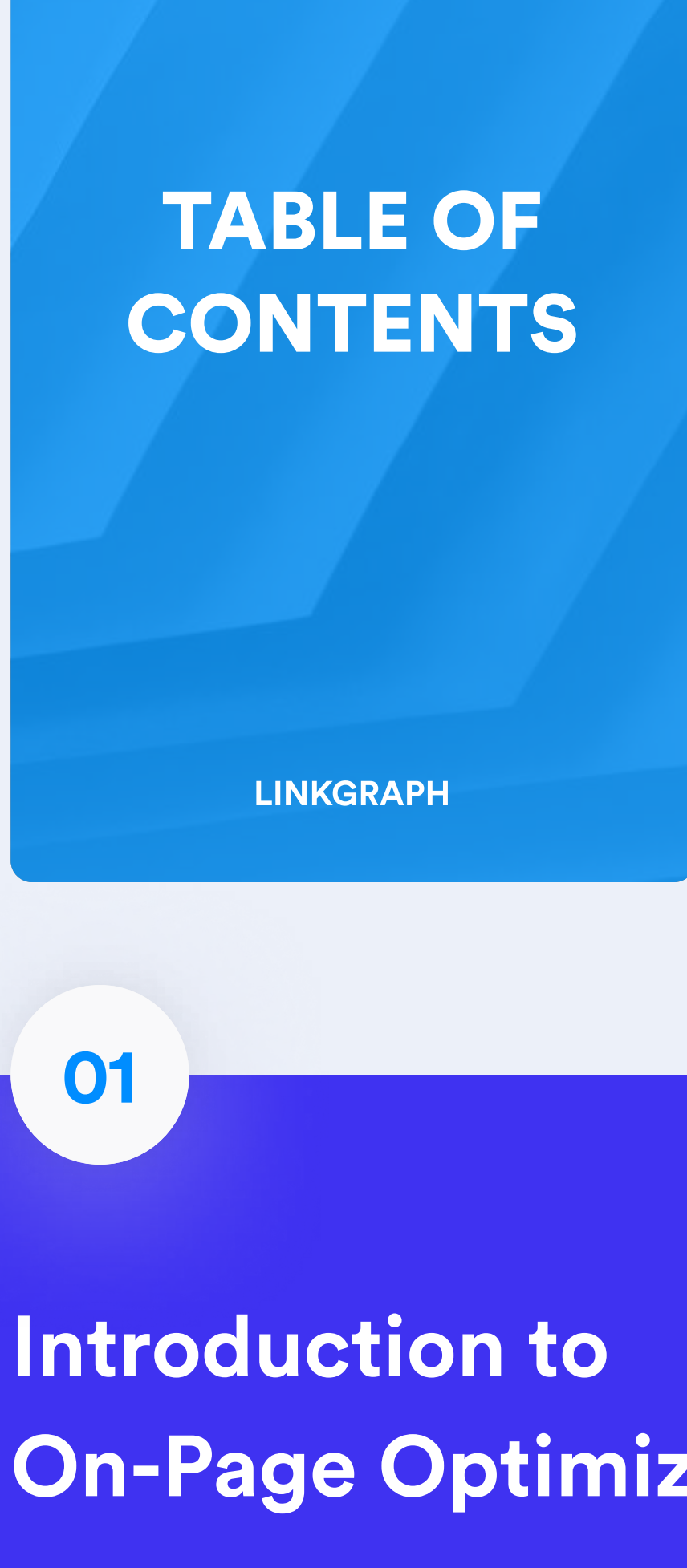


The Complete Guide to SEO On-Page Content Optimization

Written by Manick Bhan, CTO of LinkGraph



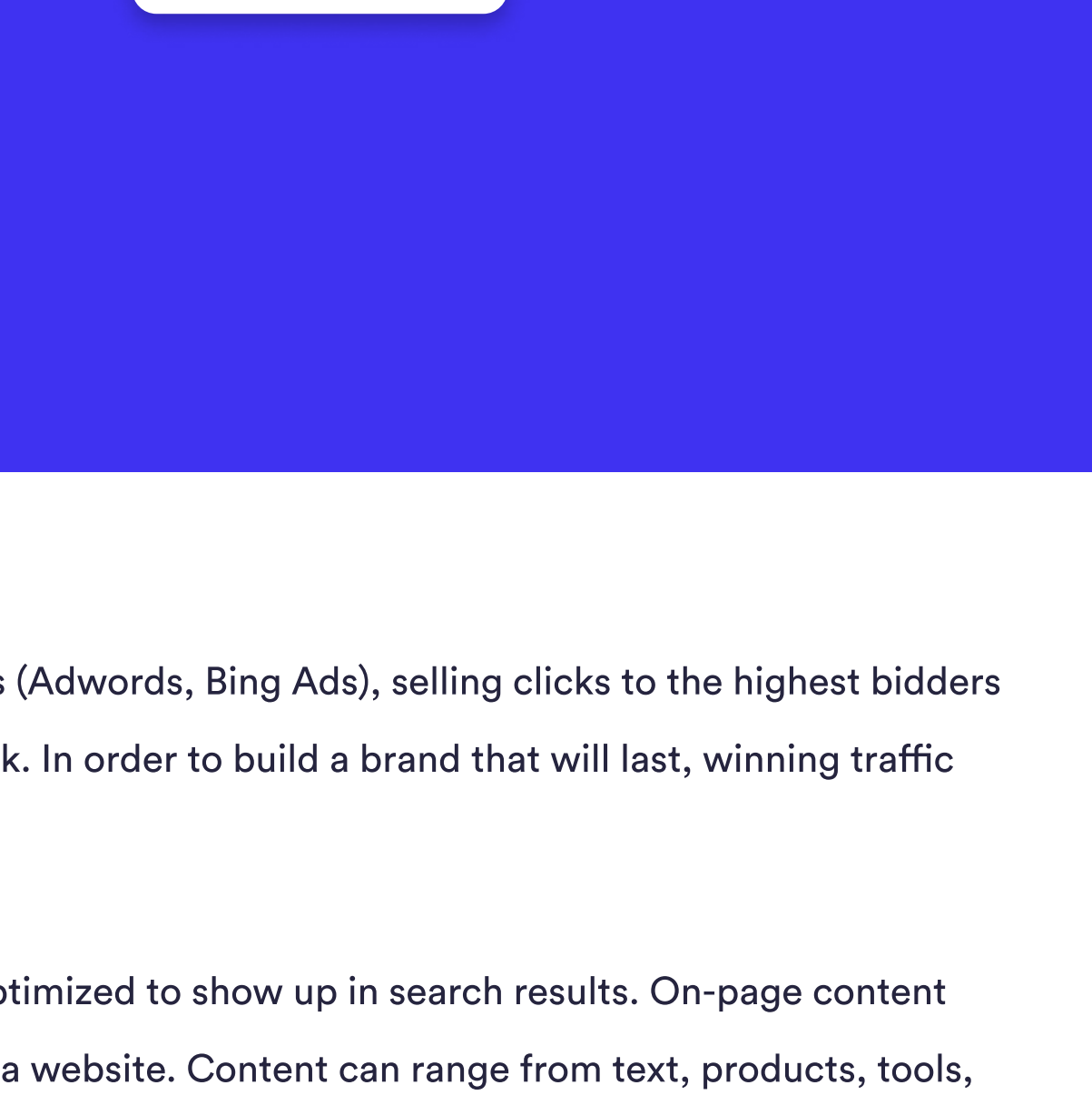
01 Introduction to On-Page Optimization	06 How to Refine your SEO Strategy and Rank Higher
02 Everything you Need to Know About Keyword Research	07 After you Optimize: How to Keep Driving Traffic and Conversions
03 Optimizing Web Pages for Search	08 The Best Content Optimization Tools
04 Optimizing HTML Tags and Technicals	09 Final Thoughts on Optimization
05 Using Google Tools and Platforms to Monitor Your Optimization Efforts	

01

Introduction to On-Page Optimization

For all digital brands, search engine optimization is a required step in growing a business. Over 3.5 billion Google searches are made every day, and the number of searches grows by 10% each year. Most people use search engines when looking for new products, local businesses, or services, so for any business that wants to grow and compete in the digital world, capturing organic traffic from search is an absolute must.

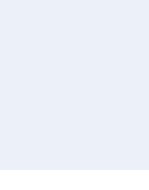
In this ebook, we are going to unpack our strategy towards on-page optimization with our clients.



Google and Bing allow companies to buy temporary visibility in search results (Adwords, Bing Ads), selling clicks to the highest bidders in highly competitive auctions at prices that can be \$30 or more for just a click. In order to build a brand that will last, winning traffic through organic search is a must.

But in order to earn that organic traffic, your website's content needs to be optimized to show up in search results. On-page content refers to the visible content and HTML source code of every landing page on a website. Content can range from text, products, tools, forms, blog posts, ebooks, images, or videos, but it all needs to be high-value in the eyes of your users and search engines.

When you create content ask yourself these questions. Why should Google rank your landing pages? Are they comprehensive and well researched? How much effort did you put into building them? Is your target keyword even on the landing page? What's your word count? If you want to create content that ranks, it needs to be high-quality, unique, long-form, informative, engaging, and have good information architecture that shows topical authority and depth.



“Most of the time I see thin landing pages without content or weak information architecture, or if there's content it's fluffy or generic. In Google's GSA algorithm, they score the content quality of pages to determine your keyword rankings. In their core algo updates, they've specifically provided guidance that these signals are important to them. In the BERT update, and even Panda previously, we've seen how important content quality signals are to Google.”

- MANICK BHAN, CTO OF LINKGRAPH

Having the right content and keyword strategy will drastically determine whether your landing pages get traffic from Google. But to do on-page optimization successfully, you need to have the right tools, a foundational understanding of search metrics and ranking factors, and the time and effort it takes to make your web pages worthy of page 1!

For those who want to learn how to optimize their landing pages, this is the ultimate guide on how to strategically optimize on-page content. The larger your website, the more work and time you'll need to dedicate, so having a dedicated team of SEO-trained content creators, or seeking out the help of an SEO agency, is key for larger and enterprise-level organizations.

Why Optimization Matters

Those webmasters who take the time to incorporate the best practices of content optimization are more likely to succeed in search. Not only is content optimization more affordable than paid search marketing, [70% of marketers](#) see it as more effective.

The primary reason why SEO has higher ROI than PPC campaigns is that SEO provides traffic to perpetuity. PPC campaigns essentially let you rent that traffic short-term and don't provide any long-term compounding growth benefits. When a paid search campaign ends, so do the clicks. However, earning a coveted spot in the SERPs can keep organic traffic and potential customers coming to your website for years.



“I've spent \$2 million per quarter running PPC ads for an ecommerce startup, and over \$1 million per month for law firms. If I could go back and do one thing differently, it would have been to invest more in SEO.”

- MANICK BHAN, CTO OF LINKGRAPH

Optimizing content as you create it, monitoring that content's performance in Google Analytics, and re-optimizing as time passes, are the three major steps in implementing a successful onsite SEO strategy.

What is On-Page Content?

On-page content is made up of both the visible content and the onsite technicals of your website. This includes any content you've created to be viewed and used by the people who visit your site, as well as the invisible meta tags, HTML markup, and bot specific elements you've added to your site or site code to make your content easily parsable by bots and crawlers (Google Bot, Facebook Bot, Applebot, and hundreds of others).

— Landing page copy

- Grammar, spelling, syntax, and diction should be appropriate for audience
- Topical depth: including all related ideas and topics adjacent to the core keyword you're optimizing for
- Long form content: needs to explore your topic in suitable breadth and depth

— HTML/CSS/JS Code Quality

- Minimal redundant or unused code
- Compression and “minification” of all static files
- Using a CDN for static asset delivery off-webserver.
- Minimize post-pageload HTML DOM modifications (like inserting forms, videos)
- No render blocking javascript
- Quick time-to-first-byte (TTFB) from your webserver

— Meta tags and structured data for search engines

- Title tags
- Meta descriptions
- Header tags (H1, H2, H3)
- Schema.org markup and microdata

— Information architecture

- Internal Linking
- On-page navigation like jump-links and tables of contents

— Rich media

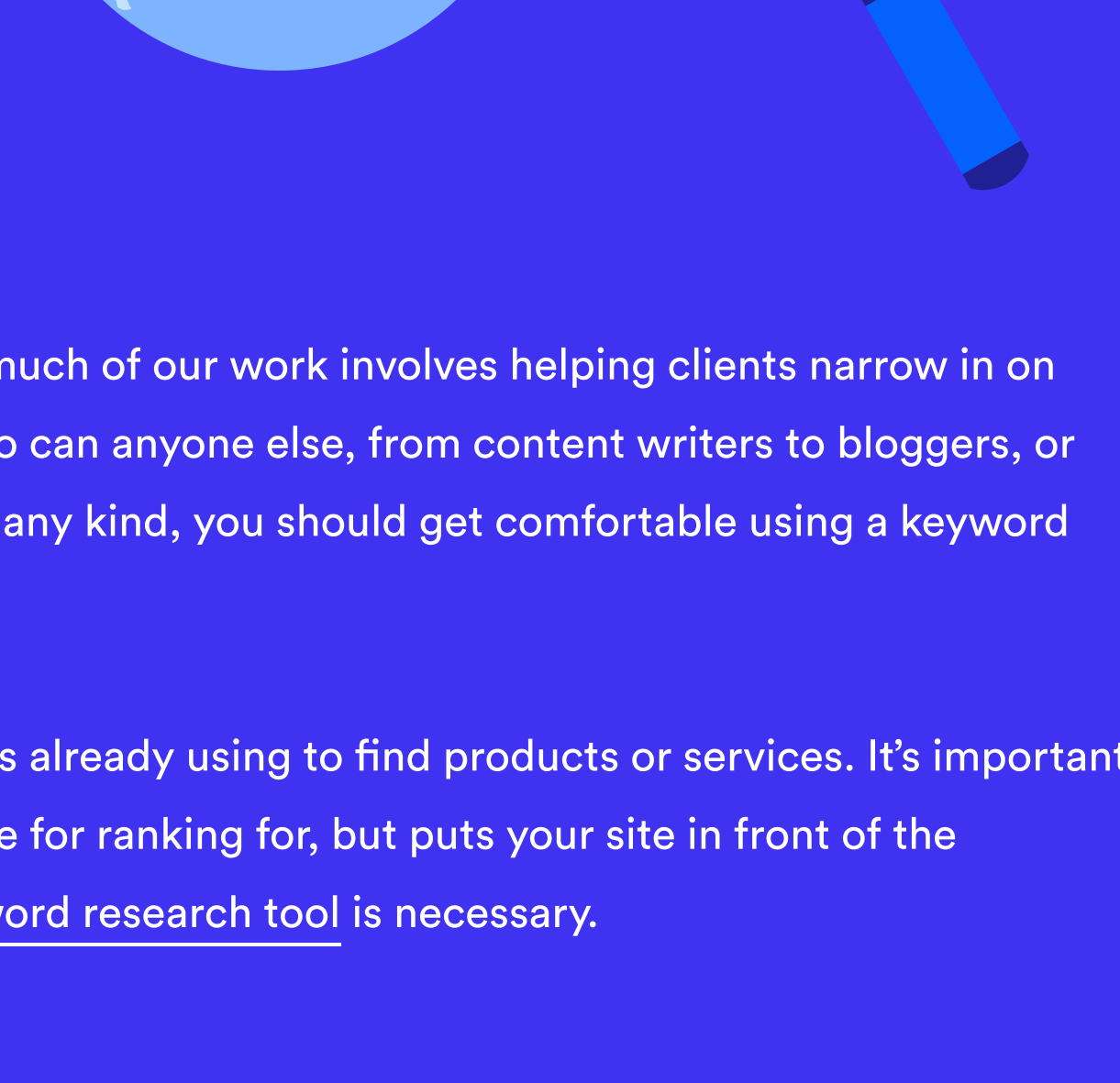
- Images
- Videos
- Embedded tweets, etc.

Onsite SEO, then, are the optimizations you can to the above components so your content ranks better in search engines. These optimizations can range from changing HTML tags and meta descriptions, to including more keywords and headings, but this eBook will provide you with guidance on the many ways you can optimize your site from the comfort of your own computer.

02

Everything you Need to Know About Keyword Research

Before you start optimizing, you have to do your keyword homework. Keywords can be tricky; they trend, they change, they grow long-tails...yet keyword metrics are the most valuable data sets you can have before you start optimizing.



SEO experts are well-versed in the data of search metrics, and much of our work involves helping clients narrow in on relevant keywords. But with a keyword research tool like ours, so can anyone else, from content writers to bloggers, or online marketers to webmasters. If you create online content of any kind, you should get comfortable using a keyword tool prior to your content creation.

The best keywords to target are those that your ideal audience is already using to find products or services. It's important to choose keywords that not only your site stands a good chance for ranking for, but puts your site in front of the audience seeking your product or services. This is where a [keyword research tool](#) is necessary.

Using a Keyword Research Tool

Keyword research tools are designed to help you make the most strategic decisions about optimization. By understanding key SEO metrics, you will learn which are the most profitable keywords to target to get you in the relevant searches and in front of your ideal audience.

You can utilize our Keyword Research Tracker for free available in your LinkGraph customer dashboard, or you can find another tool that provides the search volume, keyword difficulty, and CPC metrics necessary to make informed decisions about which keywords to target.

KEYWORD	SV	CPC	DIFF	PAID
call center automation	45			
call center software	45			
seo tools	87	6.0K	\$11	
free seo tools	87	1.3K	\$12	
best seo tools	78	1.3K	\$13	
cheapest seo tools	65	50	\$8.8	

In the above images, you will see some keywords alongside their accompanying search metrics. By understanding these terms, you can make some inferences about which keywords provide you the most potential opportunities to rank.

Organic Difficulty (OD)

This score determines how difficult it is to rank for the keyword

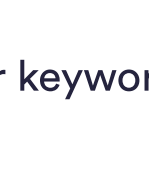
Search Volume (SV)

Number of searches for this keyword in a particular period of time

Cost-Per-Click (CPC)

The amount you would pay-per-click to target this keyword in a PPC campaign

Understanding how all of these terms relate to each other is another important factor in successful optimization. Popular keywords are usually accompanied by higher monthly search volume, but that doesn't automatically qualify them as the best choice for you. You need to take more than that into consideration when it comes to gaining visibility in the search engine results pages, particularly if you're a webmaster that's just starting out.



“We created our own Keyword Difficulty metric because after using other SEO software tools with our clients, we found their metrics to be a poor representation of the actual ranking difficulty. When we built our keyword research tool, we realized we needed to make it easy for SEOs to understand which keywords they actually had a chance of ranking for, so we created these metrics for an easier benchmark that was far more true-to-life.”

- MANICK BHAN, CTO OF LINKGRAPH

How to Evaluate Keywords

There isn't always a direct correlation between the most popular keywords and the keywords that are the right choices for your website or business goals.

For example, the search phrase, “Discount Shoes,” gets 18K searches a month. That's an attractive number of searches, but the competition level for that target keyword is extremely high. Websites like Zappos, DSW, and Famous Footwear have high domain authorities and already occupy the top spots in the SERPs for that given keyword phrase.

When it comes to smart keyword research, the general rule of thumb is this: The best keywords to target are the ones you stand the best chance of ranking for and the best chance of converting from. Every new piece of content you create--whether a new landing page or a blog post--should target a new keyword so you have more opportunities to rank in more SERPs.

The best keywords should meet the following criteria:

— Strong search intent for your content

Does your content provide a high-quality, in-depth answer to what users are searching for?

— Meaningful search volume

If your keyword doesn't get any search traffic, you'll be optimizing your landing page for nobody.

— Search difficulty should be achievable for your website

You will stand a chance of ranking for the keywords that have a Search Difficulty that is less than or equal to your website's Site Authority. If you're trying to rank for a very competitive keyword like “buy yankees tickets,” try a longer-tail variant like “discount yankees tickets” that is less competitive.

— Check the CPC for higher conversions

CPC is a proxy for the economic value of searches. For publications and certain companies this may not be as important, but if you're targeting high-value keywords this can be a useful barometer of conversion potential.

KEYWORD	SV	CPC	DIFF
yankees tickets	58	60.0K	
discount yankees tickets	48	210	

A Little about Long-Tail Keywords

Targeting these long-tail search phrases with blog posts can be very effective because they have a more specific search intent and are far less competitive than other keywords.

Targeting long-tail keywords can also be an effective optimization strategy because it tends to result in higher conversions. Those users who rely on long-tail search queries are usually further down the sales funnel and more ready to make a purchase, fill out a form, or offer an email address.



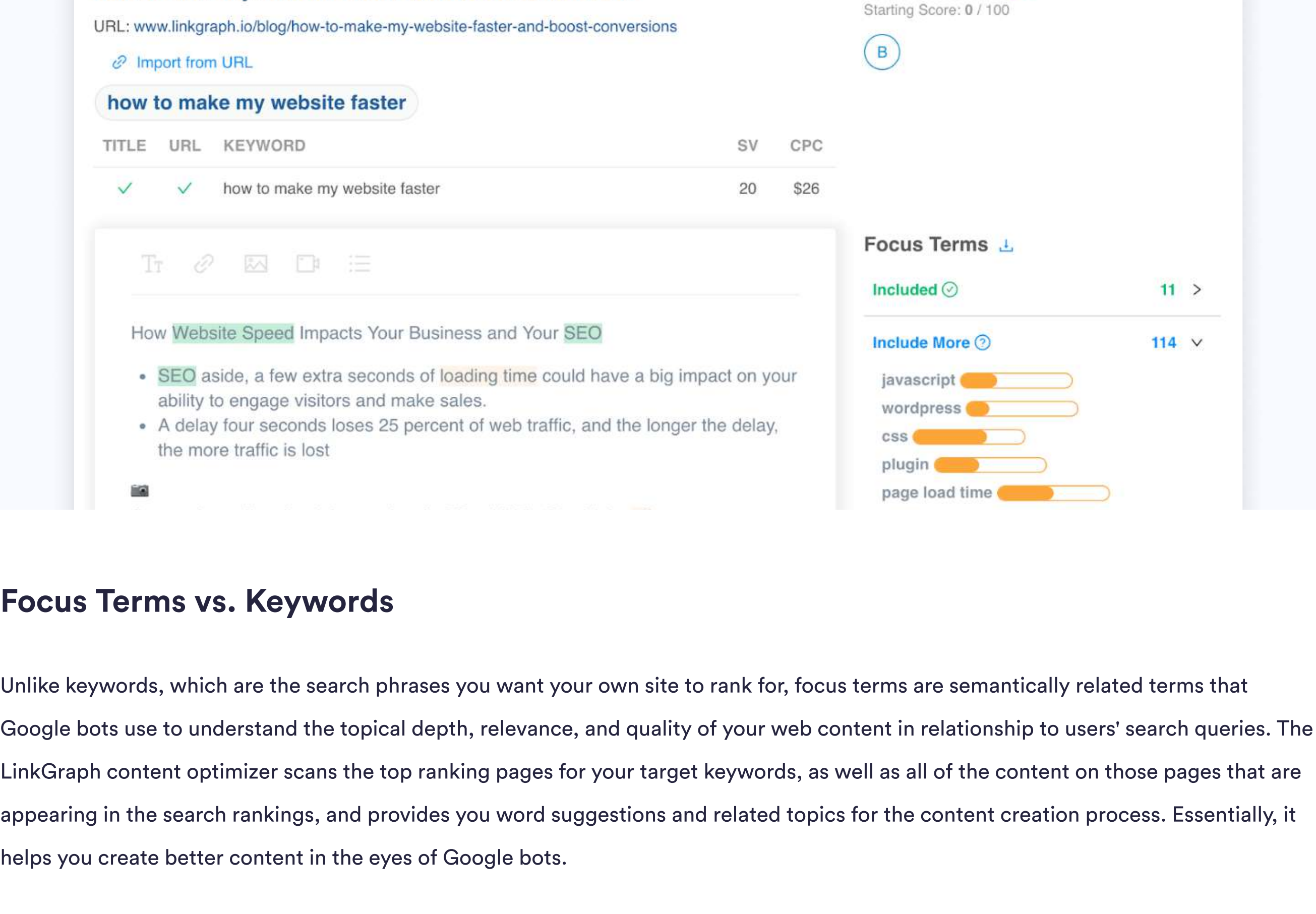
03

Optimizing Web Pages for Search

Once you've chosen the best keywords, the next step is to start writing and optimizing your landing page copy.

But optimizing content goes far beyond simply hitting a keyword quota. In the early days of SEO strategy, simple keyword stuffing tactics worked, but search engines keep getting smarter and better at understanding the content of a web page.

For this reason, a content optimizer tool like ours can help you include your primary keyword phrases alongside Focus Terms that Google is expecting to see on your landing pages. These Focus Terms are topics, ideas, and phrases that we've determined are related and important to the keyword search you're trying to rank for. Incorporating Focus Terms will help your landing page demonstrate topical depth and expertise.



Focus Terms vs. Keywords

Unlike keywords, which are the search phrases you can help your own site to rank for, focus terms are semantically related terms that Google bots use to understand the topical depth, relevance, and quality of your web content in relationship to users' search queries. The LinkGraph content optimizer scans the top ranking pages for your target keywords, as well as all of the content on those pages that are appearing in the search rankings, and provides you word suggestions and related topics for the content creation process. Essentially, it helps you create better content in the eyes of Google bots.

High-ranking content often shares certain similarities. Long content, original research and reporting, infographics, and authoritative content all tend to have better content performance in search engine rankings. Google's algorithm rewards quality content, and making your own content more rich and in-depth becomes easier with the help of a SEO content optimizer tool like ours.

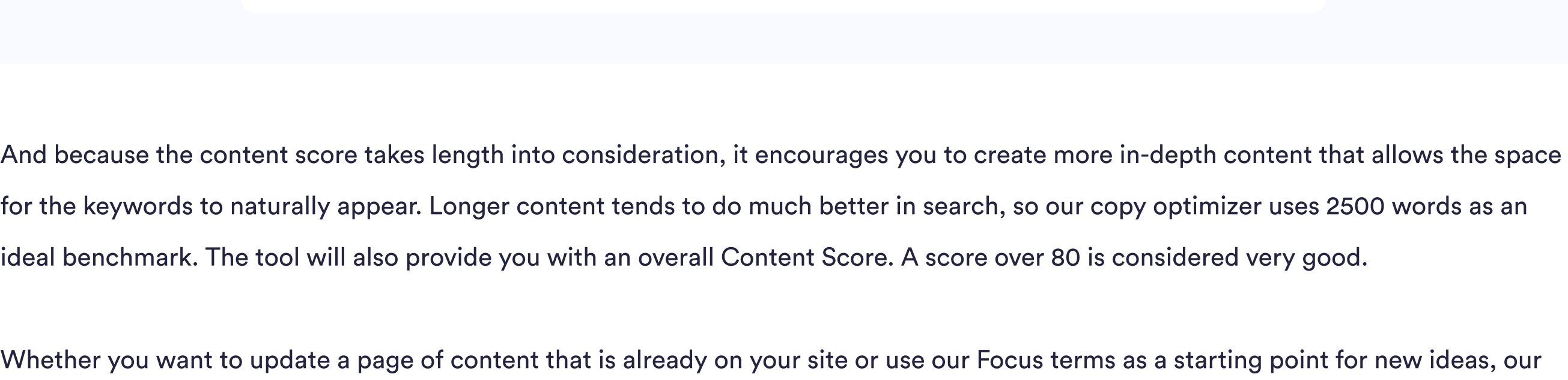
Like the Keyword Research Tracker, the copy optimizer tool is available in your LinkGraph customer dashboard. You can also download the LinkGraph Chrome extension to automatically transfer your web page content into our tool with a click and start your optimization work right away.

Using the Copy Optimizer Tool

Whether you are creating a brand new piece of content, or revising an existing landing page, our tool makes the process of optimization easy, even for SEO beginners.

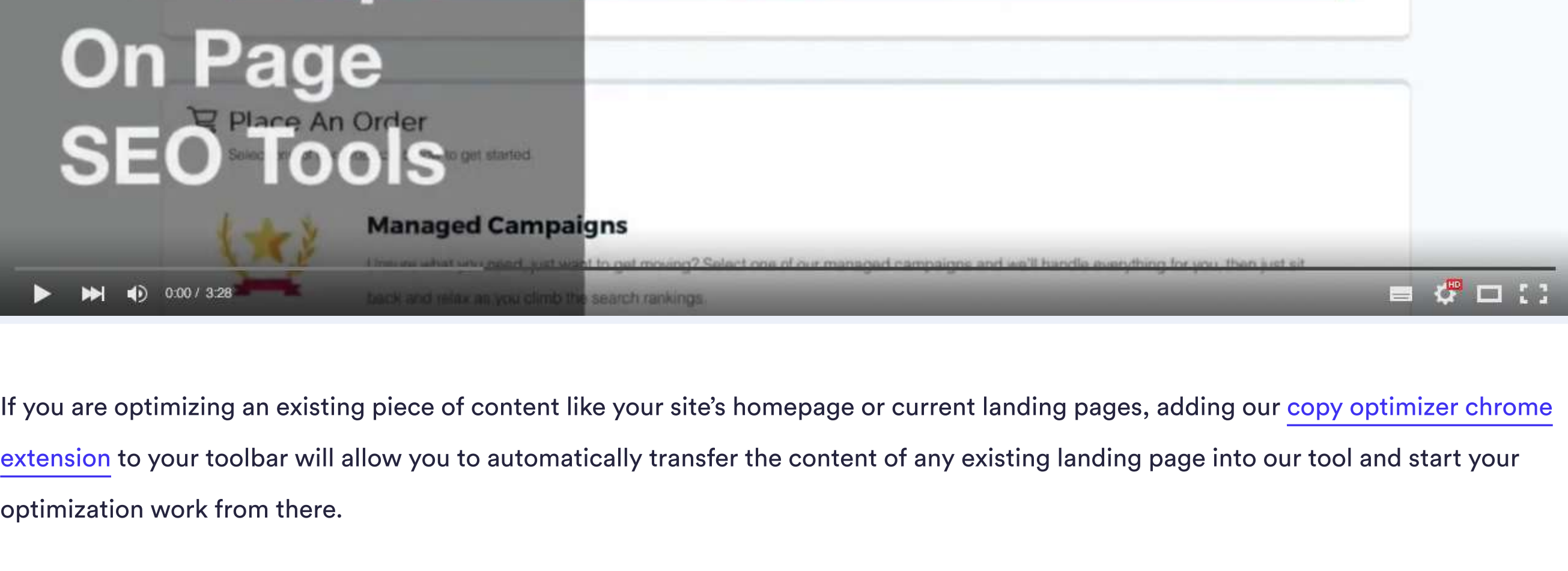
As you draft your content, our tool will keep track of the Focus Terms that you have incorporated and will provide you with a content score. Think of it like a content performance score: the higher it is, the more likely your content will get a higher ranking for your desired search term. Even small changes to syntax, vocabulary, complex sentences or phrasing can help you maintain the readability of the content while also optimizing for search.

Also, the content optimizer's color-coded highlighting alerts you to which terms you have sufficiently included, which need to be included more, and which are being overused.



And because the content score takes length into consideration, it encourages you to create more in-depth content that allows the space for the keywords to naturally appear. Longer content tends to do much better in search, so our copy optimizer uses 2500 words as an ideal benchmark. The tool will also provide you with an overall Content Score. A score over 80 is considered very good.

Whether you want to update a page of content that is already on your site or use our Focus terms as a starting point for new ideas, our tool is the easiest way to see SEO success in not much time. In the below video, you will find a tutorial on how to use the copy optimizer tool to create the best content on your landing pages.



If you are optimizing an existing piece of content like your site's homepage or current landing pages, adding our [copy optimizer chrome extension](#) to your toolbar will allow you to automatically transfer the content of any existing landing page into our tool and start your optimization work from there.

Additional Considerations when Optimizing Content

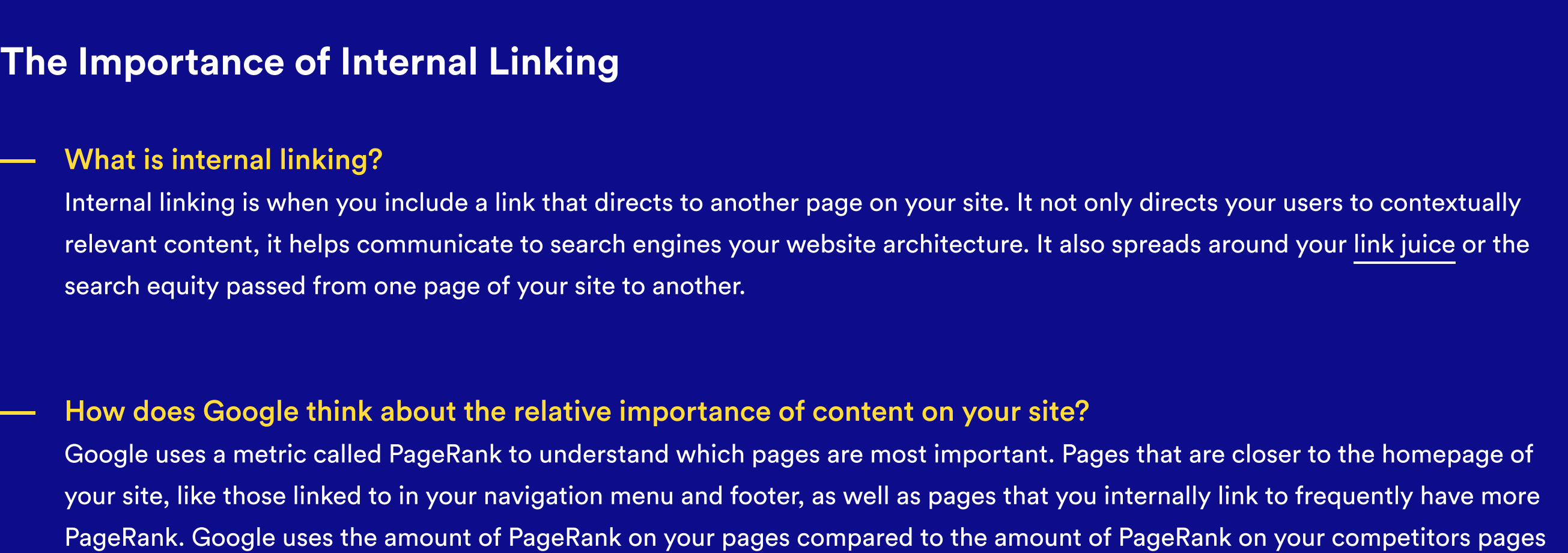
Starting in 2017, Google's search quality teams have been specifically focusing their engineering efforts towards content-quality signals and have pushed core algorithm updates every quarter. Their BERT update in October 2019 was one of the most meaningful content related updates they've rolled out in years.

Bert has helped Google crawlers understand language and keyword usage the way that human's use it. Google will continue to do a better job of identifying quality content among its index as algorithms and content-quality signals become even more refined. For this reason, the sole focus of your copywriters and content team should be to simply create great content, because creating high-quality content is essential to the success of your optimization efforts in the long run.

Although quality may feel subjective, Google's webmaster guidelines are clear about what quality looks like in the eyes of Google bots. Search engines want to rank good content, and they look for hints about the quality of every web page they index, from headlines and subheads to keyword density and url structure. Each element of website optimization communicates to Google whether your content will keep readers' attention and whether they will find your content valuable and useful.

Factors like content uniqueness, content length, external and internal links, anchor text, headings, grammar, syntax and readability all influence whether or not your content ranks. On their blog, [Google](#) advises webmasters to consider multiple questions about the pieces of content they create.

- Does the content provide original information, reporting, research or analysis?
- Does the content provide a substantial, complete or comprehensive description of the topic?
- Does the content provide insightful analysis or interesting information that is beyond obvious?
- If the content draws on other sources, does it avoid simply copying or rewriting those sources and instead provide substantial additional value and originality?
- Does the headline and/or page title provide a descriptive, helpful summary of the content?



The Importance of Internal Linking

What is internal linking? Internal linking is when you include a link that directs to another page on your site. It not only directs your users to contextually relevant content, it helps communicate to search engines your website architecture. It also spreads around your [link juice](#) or the search equity passed from one page of your site to another.

How does Google think about the relative importance of content on your site? Google uses a metric called PageRank to understand which pages are most important. Pages that are closer to the homepage of your site, like those linked to in your navigation menu and footer, as well as pages that you internally link to frequently have more PageRank. Google uses the amount of PageRank on your pages compared to the amount of PageRank on your competitors pages as a component of its ranking algorithm.

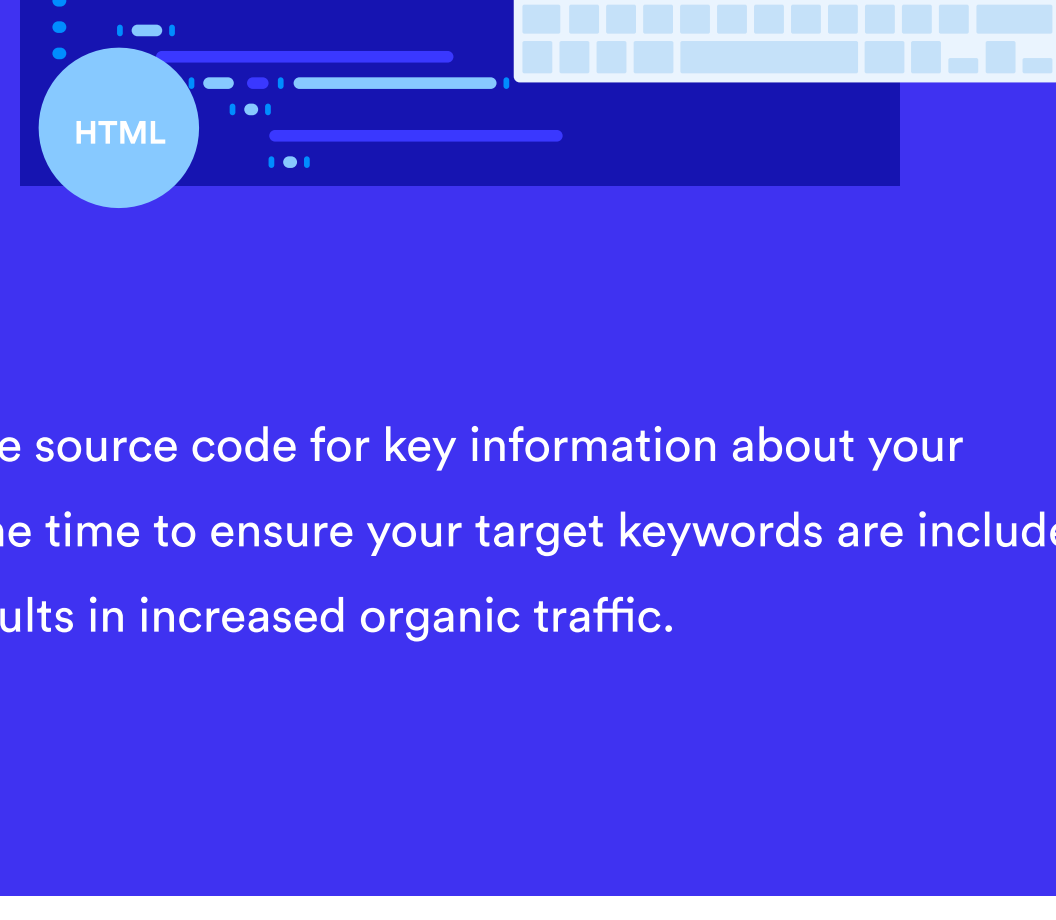
There are ways to use internal links to direct landing pages with higher PageRank to the most important pages on your site. For SEO purposes, you can evaluate content performance primarily through keyword rankings, or determine highest-performing pages through conversion rates. Then, direct PageRank toward those important pages to get them ranking more often. This is an advanced strategy and should only be implemented by SEO pros for the best results.

The anchor text of your internal links, as well as the semantic context surrounding them, are important indicators to Google about what type of information your pages contain and help them understand what type of searches they could be relevant for. These internal links also allow you to demonstrate topical depth and authority for your target keywords.

Where should I put internal links on my site? Outside of your navigation bar, blog posts are good opportunities to internally link to related high-value landing pages on your site. Do you have another post that explains a certain concept with more detail? Or do you provide a tool or service that can help meet a user's needs? The more content that you create, the more important internal linking becomes, as it serves as a kind of directory for your users and shows search engines that your site has topical depth in your niche or vertical.

Optimizing HTML Tags and Technicals

When it comes to optimizing HTML tags and technicals, non SEO experts may feel intimidated to start making changes or adjustments to source code. But if you have a CMS like WordPress, making adjustments to your tags is very simple.

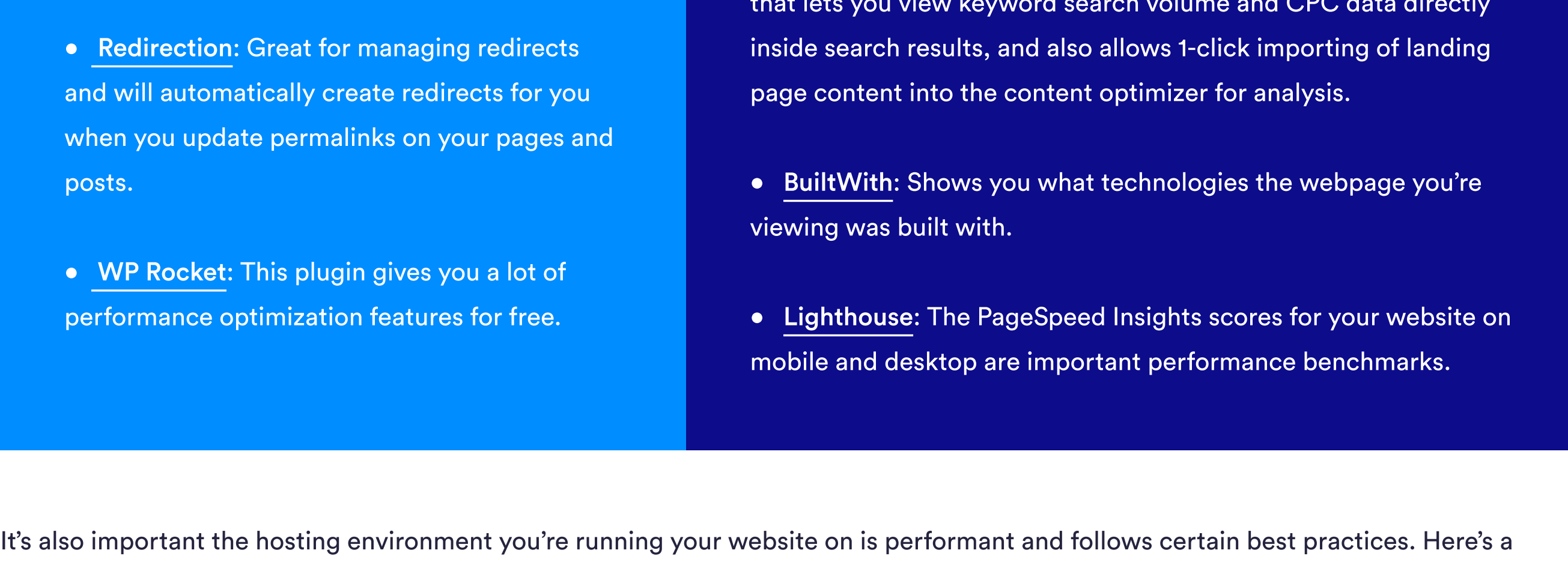


Remember that when search engines crawl your site, they look to the source code for key information about your website's content and relevance to specific search queries. Taking the time to ensure your target keywords are included in your primary HTML tags is an essential step in seeing tangible results in increased organic traffic.

Content Management System and Hosting

The majority of webmasters use a content management system (CMS) like Wordpress to manage their website. Depending on your CMS, you should be able to specify your title tags, meta description, and HTML tags fairly easily.

When it comes to optimizing the onsite technicals of your website for search, having some familiarity with your CMS will be necessary. We use a modified version of Wordpress for most of our clients given it's flexibility, ease of use, and performance. We've done optimization work inside other website builders like Wix, Squarespace, Weebly, and Shopify, and have generally found that the lack of direct control over the hosting environment and server limit the SEO capabilities of these platforms, and we would not suggest them for enterprise-grade organizations.



It's also important the hosting environment you're running your website on is performant and follows certain best practices. Here's a checklist of key functionality you need to have:

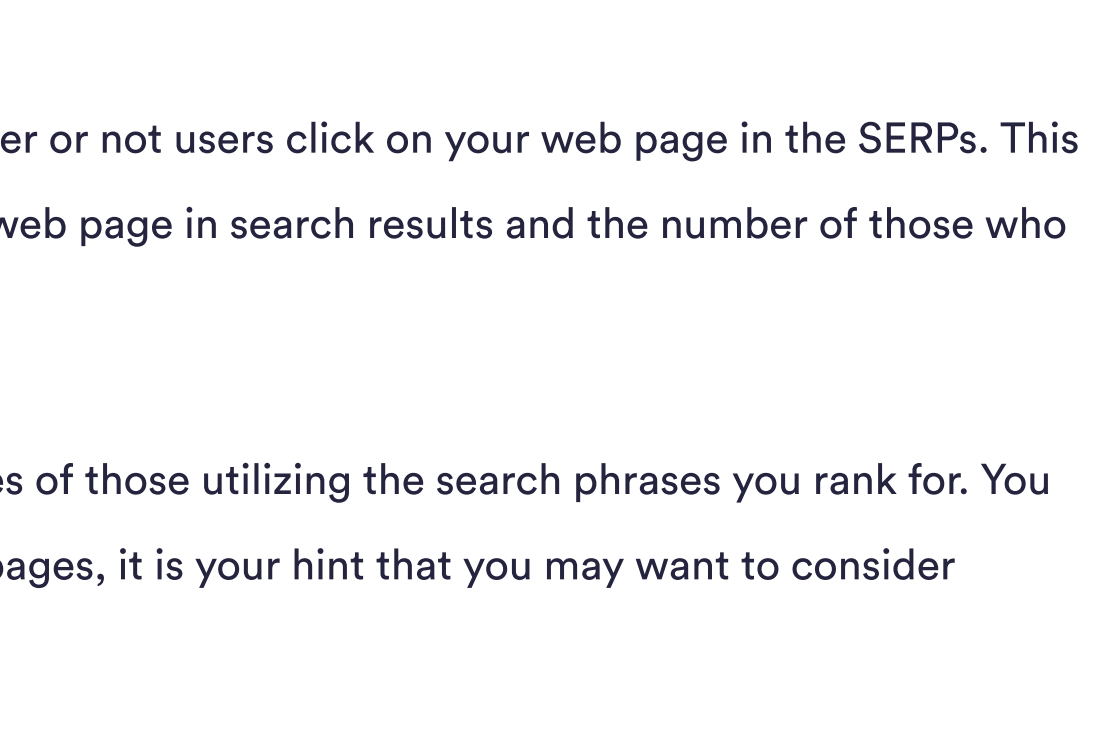
- Automatic site backups** These should be daily. This way, in case something goes wrong with your site during development, you'll be able to automatically restore a last known good configuration.
- Easily add/remove SFTP credentials** Developers use SFTP to push the Wordpress pages they're coding directly to the server. If your developer has to log into your linux server over SSH to add/remove engineers from being able to access the site, you're not doing it right.
- Easily add SSL certificates for free** There's no need to buy SSL certificates anymore, so ditch the Verisign / Comodo racket and use [LetsEncrypt](#) for free SSL certificates.
- Restore previous site snapshots within a few clicks** It's inevitable you're going to need to do this at some point. When the 🚬 hits the fan, you'll be happy you can bring back your site within a few clicks.
- Self-healing** If your hosting server goes down, it needs to be able to revive and turn itself back on. It shouldn't take a developer to have to SSH into the server to restart Apache or Nginx to bring your site back online.
- A separate production environment from your development environment** developers working on your live site? This is fine if your site is small and doesn't get a lot of traffic, but if your business generates over \$1 million a year through your site your developers shouldn't be coding directly on production. Having your live site break because of a development mistake is stressful and can cost you lost revenue, especially if you're spending money on paid media campaigns.

Optimizing Title Tags

The title tag is the HTML code that determines the title of a web page. Here is an example of what a title tag looks like in source code.

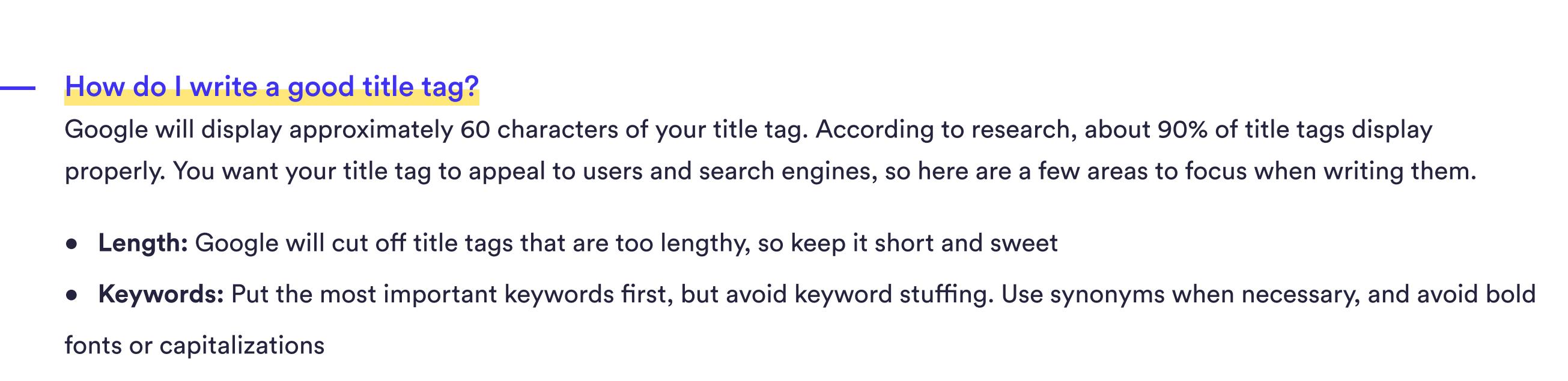
```
<title>Content Length and Seo: Does it Really Matter?</title>
```

And here is an example of how a title tag looks when your users see it in search results.



The primary reason title tags are so important is because they influence whether or not users click on your web page in the SERPs. This is known as click-through-rate (CTR), or the ratio of those who view your web page in the search results and the number of those who click on it.

A strong click-through-rate means your search is meeting the needs and desires of those utilizing the search phrases you rank for. You can find your CTR data in Google Analytics. If your CTR is low on certain webpages, it's your hint that you may want to consider changing your title tag or meta description to be more appealing to users.



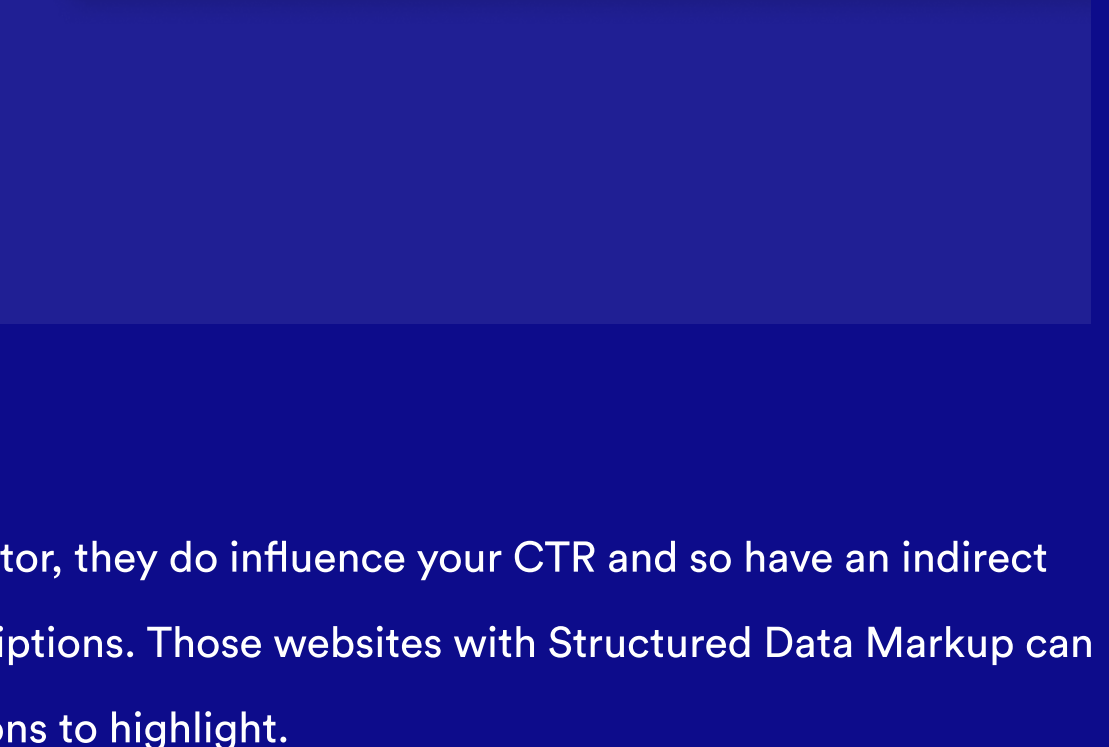
In order to optimize your title tag, you need to include the target keywords you are trying to rank for. If you have a WordPress site, your title tag will be automatically generated from the title you give your HTML document in the designated text box. To optimize effectively, you need to determine a title that both includes the primary keywords and compels your users to click.

- How do I write a good title tag?** Google will display approximately 60 characters of your title tag. According to research, about 90% of title tags display properly. You want your title tag to appeal to users and search engines, so here are a few areas to focus when writing them.
 - Length:** Google will cut off title tags that are too lengthy, so keep it short and sweet
 - Keywords:** Put the most important keywords first, but avoid keyword stuffing. Use synonyms when necessary, and avoid bold fonts or capitalizations
 - Uniqueness:** An original, relevant title tag will appeal to users and entice them to click

Optimizing Meta Descriptions

The meta description is the 160-character snippet that appears below your title tag in search results. In the below image, you will see the meta description from our previous example highlighted in red.

When it comes to optimizing this description, you should consider both your readers and search engines. This meta description should give users a brief summary of the content of your web page and entice them to click. If you are using a Wordpress site, you will find a clearly designated textbox in which to enter your meta description. The CMS will take this content and embed it into the HTML source code as a meta tag.



Although Google no longer considers meta descriptions as a direct ranking factor, they do influence your CTR and so have an indirect impact on your rankings. Google also generates rich snippets from meta descriptions. Those websites with Structured Data Markup can help communicate to Google the most important parts of their meta descriptions to highlight.

You will see that in our search result in the above example, Google rich snippets emphasized the words "content length," and "SEO," in bold font. Seeing those are the keywords we were hoping to rank for with this particular blog post, we can see the tangible results here of our optimization efforts.

Heading Tags

Heading tags structure your web page content for the benefit of both readers and search engines. Although your heading tags are not visible to users in search results, Google bots do crawl them and use them to determine the content and quality of your website. Here is what heading tags look like in source code.

In a content management system, you will be able to easily designate your h1 tag - h6 tags. However, including your one or two primary keywords over and over again in these headings will look like obvious keyword stuffing, which is a major no-no for Google.

This is where our Content Optimizer's Focus Terms terms come in handy. Using Focus Terms in your headings will help emphasize to Google the topical relevance of your content to the primary keyword you want to rank for without having to over-rely on that keyword. Google is getting smarter every year and can now understand contextual relevance and synonyms with far more nuance, which is great, because it means you don't have to exchange bad writing for ranking.

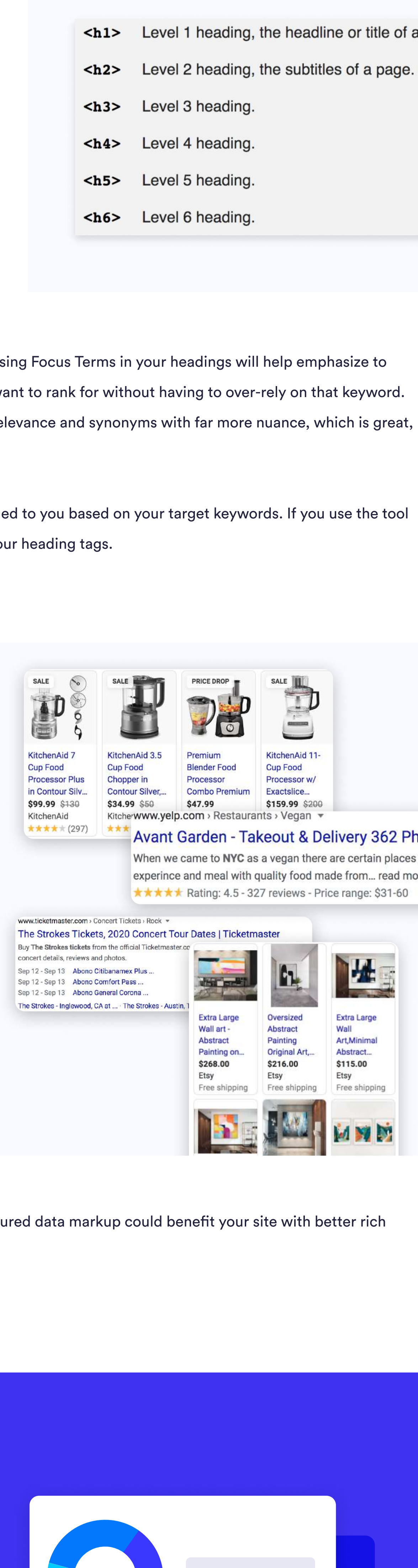
In our copy optimizer tool, there will be a list of suggested LSI terms provided to you based on your target keywords. If you use the tool to draft your web page content, it's very easy to include those terms into your heading tags.

Schema.org Markup and Rich Snippets

In order to make content on the internet more structured and search engine crawler friendly, search engines adopted the Schema.org standard to create a universal HTML microdata format for webmasters to utilize to communicate specifically with crawlers.

Rich snippets in search results, such as reviews, ratings stars, event sitelinks, product information, FAQs, social media profiles, company business details, and even a site-search box are some examples of commonly utilized schema markup by Google. Not every site will be able to utilize all of these, but utilizing the ones that apply to your website can be a powerful way to improve your CTR, traffic, and rankings. Here are some examples of rich snippets in Google search results.

You can utilize our [Rich Snippets Validator](#) tool to get a sense of how structured data markup could benefit your site with better rich snippets in search results.



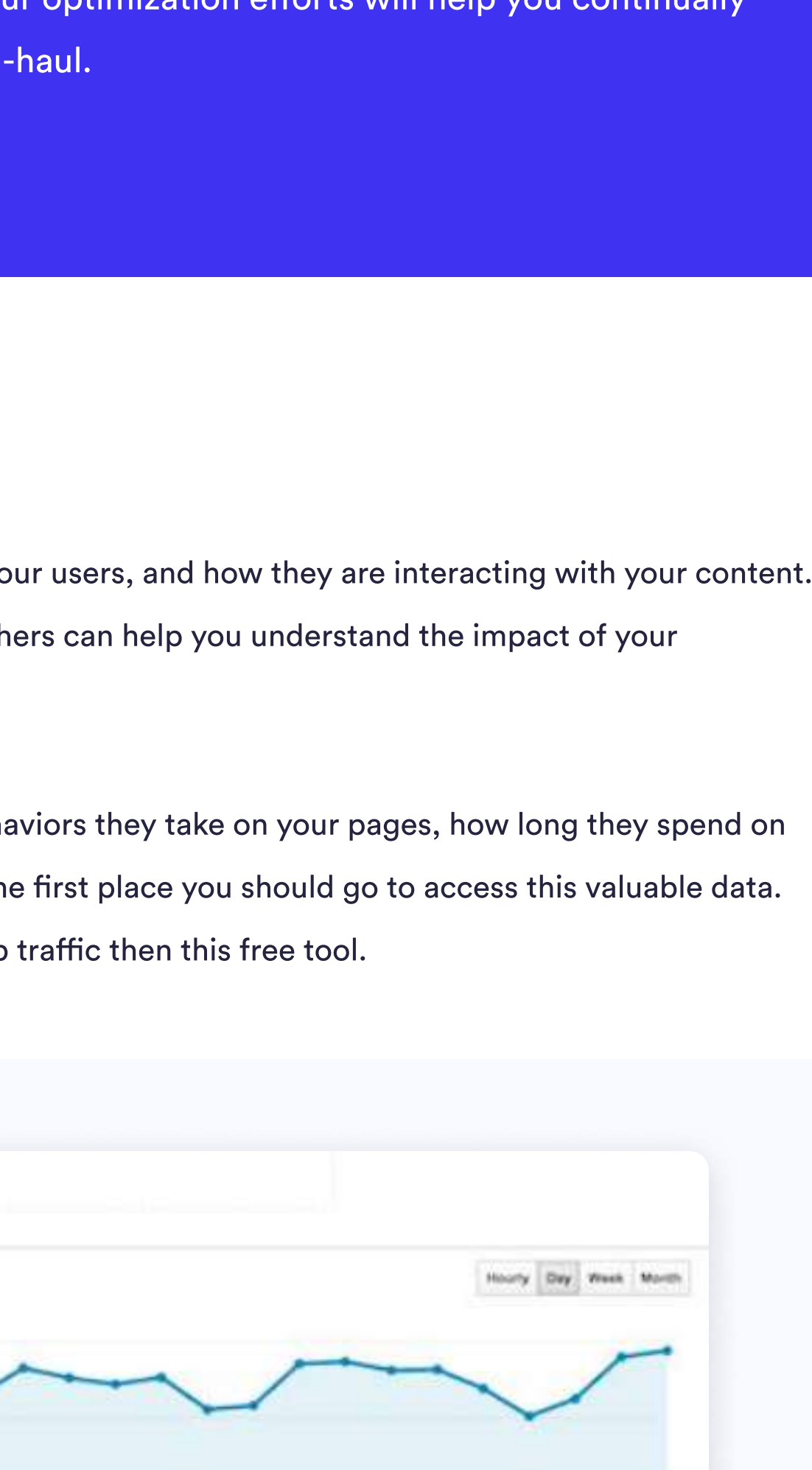
05

Using Google Analytics to Monitor Your Optimization Efforts

You will never know whether your optimization efforts are worth it unless you have the proper platforms to measure your results. Google Analytics and Google Search Console are free services that will provide you valuable data about your target audience and your organic search traffic.

We could write a whole eBook about how to get the most of these powerful platforms, but we'll just mention them in passing here to make sure you have them setup and configured properly for your website.

Getting comfortable using and understanding the features of these essential tools will allow you to know whether your optimization efforts have been successful. Measuring the results of your optimization efforts will help you continually refine your strategy so you continue to experience growth for the long-haul.



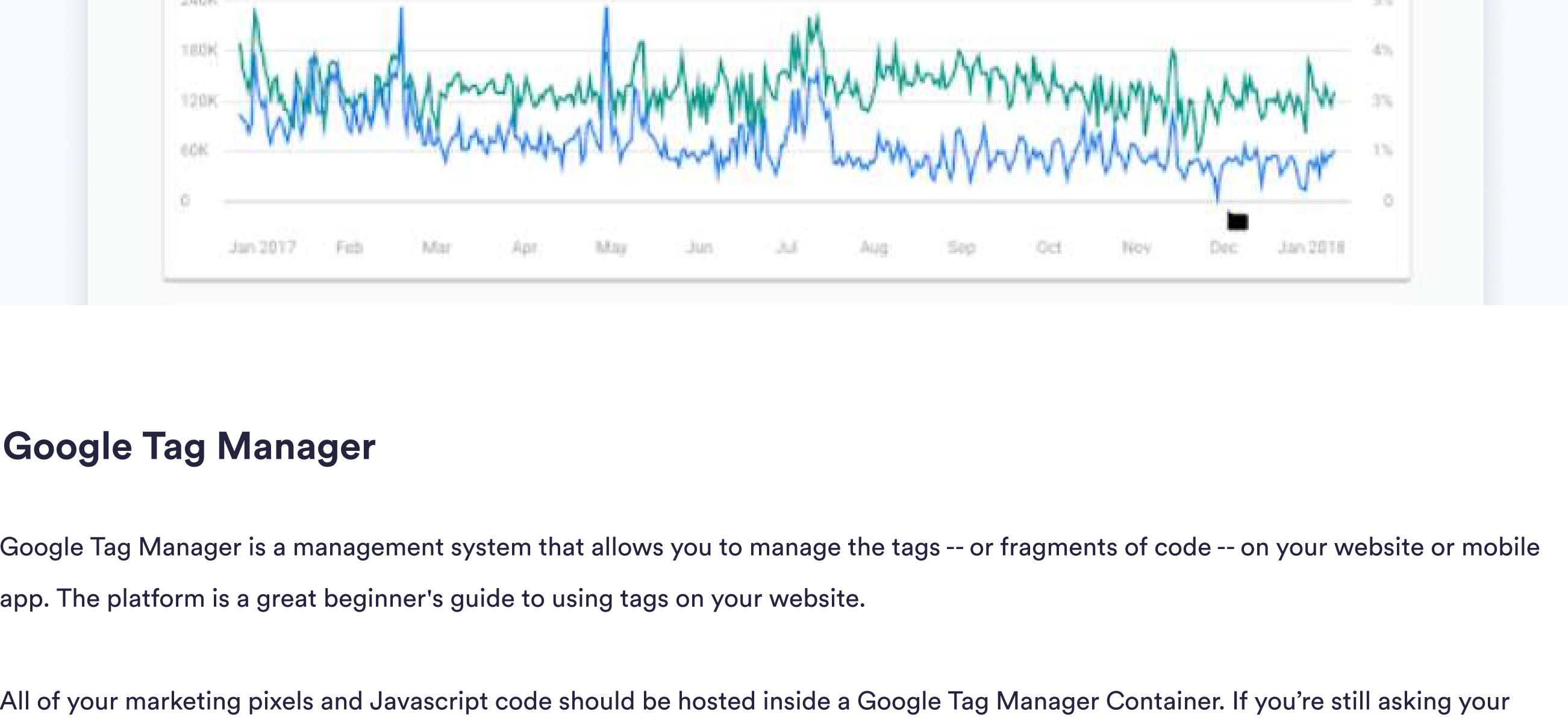
We could write a whole eBook about how to get the most of these powerful platforms, but we'll just mention them in passing here to make sure you have them setup and configured properly for your website.

Getting comfortable using and understanding the features of these essential tools will allow you to know whether your optimization efforts have been successful. Measuring the results of your optimization efforts will help you continually refine your strategy so you continue to experience growth for the long-haul.

Google Analytics

Google Analytics will provide you essential information about organic traffic, your users, and how they are interacting with your content. Metrics like CTR, page views, sessions, pages per session, bounce rate, and others can help you understand the impact of your optimization efforts and where you can improve.

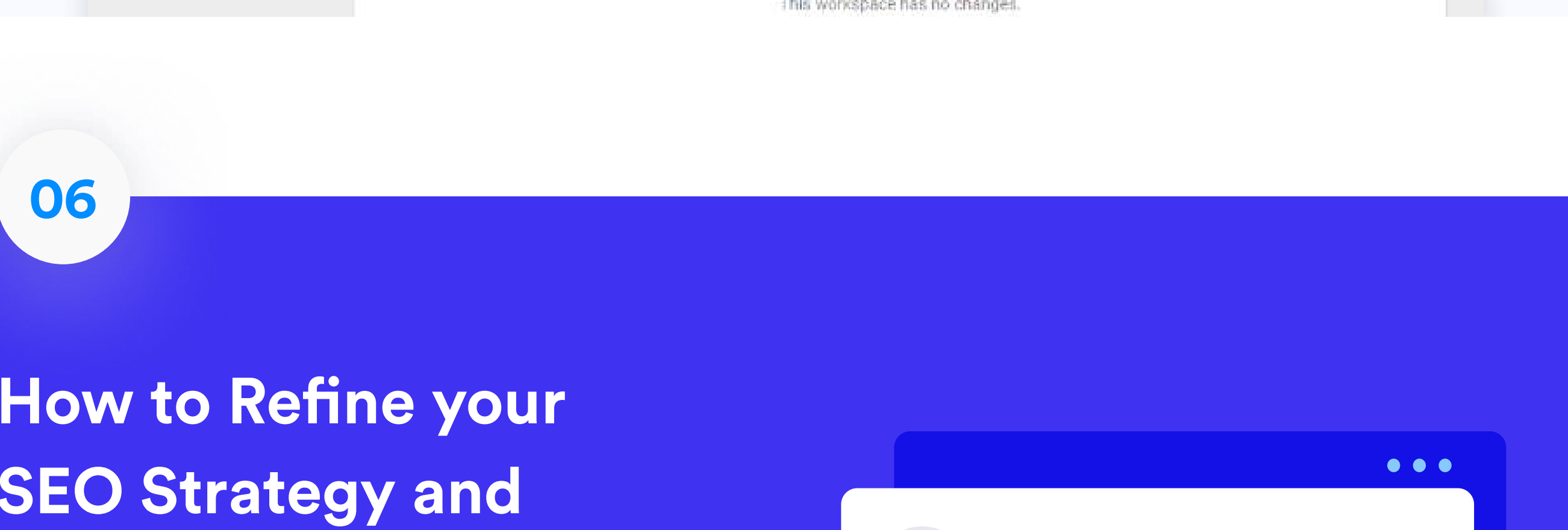
If you want to understand your site visitors' browsing experience, like what behaviors they take on your pages, how long they spend on specific pages, and at what moment they leave your site, Google Analytics is the first place you should go to access this valuable data. From an SEO perspective, there are no better insights available about your web traffic than this free tool.



Google Search Console

GSC is a platform designed to help you improve your website's performance in search engine results. With GSC, you can submit sitemaps, access crawling and indexing data, and improve your mobile usability. GSC provides rich insights into how to improve your rankings, alerts you to problems or issues, and helps you better understand how Google understands your website content overall.

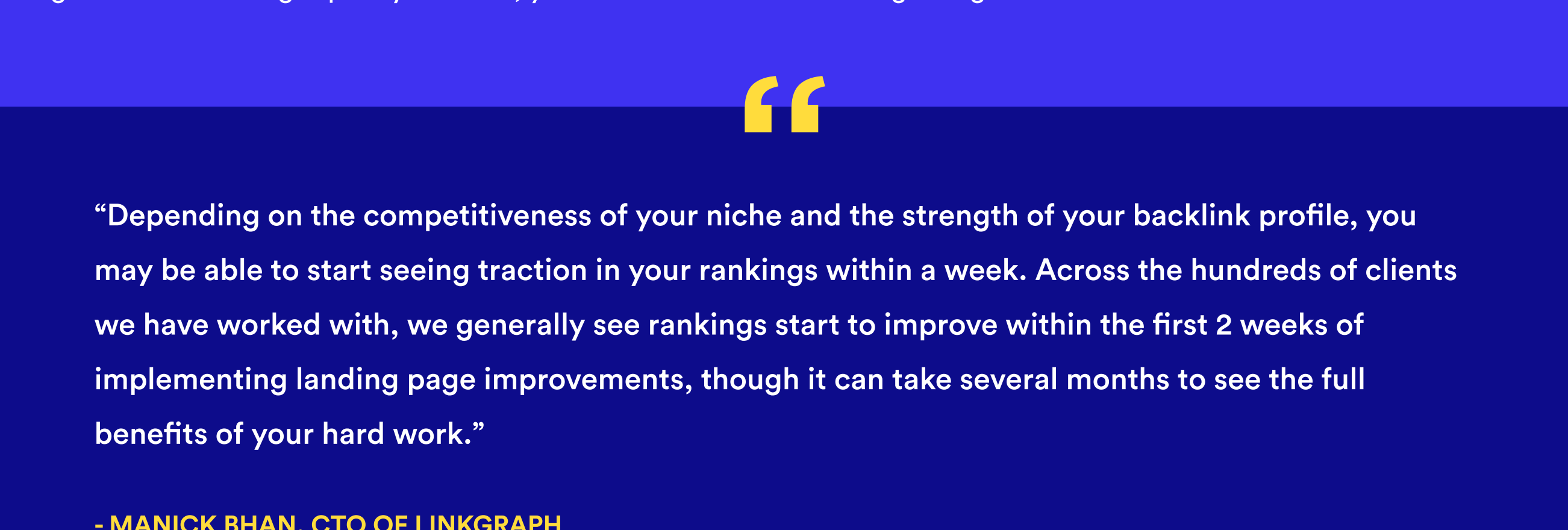
Google Search Console is the only source of truth for your keyword rankings on the internet. If you want to know what the Google rankings are for your website up-to-the-day, this is the platform that will help you make granular changes and do the performance benchmarking and A/B testing necessary to maximize your on-page optimizations to produce maximum results.



Google Tag Manager

Google Tag Manager is a management system that allows you to manage the tags -- or fragments of code -- on your website or mobile app. The platform is a great beginner's guide to using tags on your website.

All of your marketing pixels and Javascript code should be hosted inside a Google Tag Manager Container. If you're still asking your development team to add new vendor libraries for analytics or measurement, it's time to migrate to GTM. GTM is the gold standard for high performance marketing teams who iterate quickly. Since GTM is free, there's really no reason not to be using it.



06

How to Refine your SEO Strategy and Rank Higher

Once you've done the hard work of creating high-quality landing page content and optimizing it for SEO, you're ready to start monitoring your site's rankings. The ultimate goal of optimization is to rank higher and more often in organic search results, but ranking can take time... especially for new sites with weak backlink profiles.

This is why continually tracking and monitoring your search metrics is an essential part of the optimization process. Learning how to interpret Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) will give you insight into whether your efforts are successful and how you need to refine your SEO strategy to see even better results.

Ideally, your organic traffic should always be growing as you create new content, because each new piece of content or landing page should be prospecting for new keywords. If you chose keywords that weren't overly competitive and used this guide to create high quality content, you should be successful in gaining traction.

“Depending on the competitiveness of your niche and the strength of your backlink profile, you may be able to start seeing traction in your rankings within a week. Across the hundreds of clients we have worked with, we generally see rankings start to improve within the first 2 weeks of implementing landing page improvements, though it can take several months to see the full benefits of your hard work.”

- MANICK BHAN, CTO OF LINKGRAPH

Reasons your Content might not be Ranking

So after you do the initial work of optimizing your content and measure your performance in KPIs, you will most likely see some encouraging results. However, if you don't see yourself ranking for your target keywords, or your existing pages aren't currently ranking, it's time to determine where your optimization efforts can be better implemented.

Target Keyword is too Competitive

It's important to be realistic about the keyword difficulty you should be targeting in your keyword research. If you're a brand new site with no backlinks, you're not going to be able to rank on the first page of Google for any keywords with an Organic Difficulty greater than 20, no matter how in-depth, comprehensive, and useful your content is. For more competitive keywords, you'll need to improve your Site Authority by building backlinks from high quality, relevant sites.

For more competitive keywords, you'll need to improve your Site Authority by building backlinks from high quality, relevant sites. Even then, if your competitors have multiple referring domains and are well-established, there are no guarantees that backlinks alone will get you to page one. This is why keyword selection must be realistic. As your site grows with authoritative content, backlinks, and search engine traffic, you can shift your keyword optimization to focus on those more competitive keywords in your industry.

Content Score is too Low

On-page SEO is essential to search engine optimizing, but simply adding a few specific keywords into your headlines and h1 tags is not going to get any type of content onto the first page for the most competitive keywords. Even if you think your original content is fully optimized, our clients often plug in their existing landing page content into our content assistant tool to find that their content performance score is only in the 20s or 30s.

Regardless of the aesthetic quality or performance of your site, that kind of content is just unlikely to rank. As time passes, you should tweak and update your content so it continues to appear in relevant results. Remember, your competitors are likely trying to get a better rank for related keywords, so just because you earn a top search result for a few weeks doesn't mean your content types will stay there.

On-page SEO is a long-term strategy and not completed overnight. Keep revisiting your old content to think about how you can evaluate the entire topic and make it more comprehensive. Then you can do content promotion after your new updates, use it for additional lead generation, and continue the lifecycle of your content by continually using it in a new way.

Off-site Factors are Holding you Back

Off-site factors, specifically the authoritativeness and strength of your backlink profile, are some of the most powerful search factors that drive rankings. In competitive niches where you're trying to rank against authoritative domains with very mature backlink profiles, it can be challenging for new entrants to displace incumbent sites.

Although there are tools to help you put a sitemap together, bringing in an SEO expert is a good idea with this crucial step. A properly engineered sitemap can work to your advantage by guiding organic traffic to the best performing pages on your site, like those that result in conversions or lead captures.

Using a sitemap is extremely important when you have a new site or are adding many new landing pages, as it keeps Google informed of the changes you've made and helps search engine bots crawl and index your site in a way that most benefits you.

Add Lead Captures to Pages with High Traffic but Low Conversions

If you have a web page that starts to get organic traffic but doesn't include some kind of lead capture form or call-to-action (CTA), you are missing an opportunity to see increased ROI on your optimization efforts. A refined content strategy prioritizes conversions, as they help turn your increased site traffic into revenue.

Target Under-Performing Content toward Less Competitive Search Queries

By re-optimizing content to target less competitive keywords, content optimizers have the opportunity to go after new search queries without the work of creating an entirely new long-form landing page or blog post.

You should be monitoring whether or not the content you create is ranking for the original target keywords. If not, consider a new keyword and reevaluate at a later date. But be careful with this strategy. Often, your pages may start ranking for keywords you didn't expect but that still bring valuable traffic to your site.

Capitalize on your Best Performing Content with your XML Sitemap

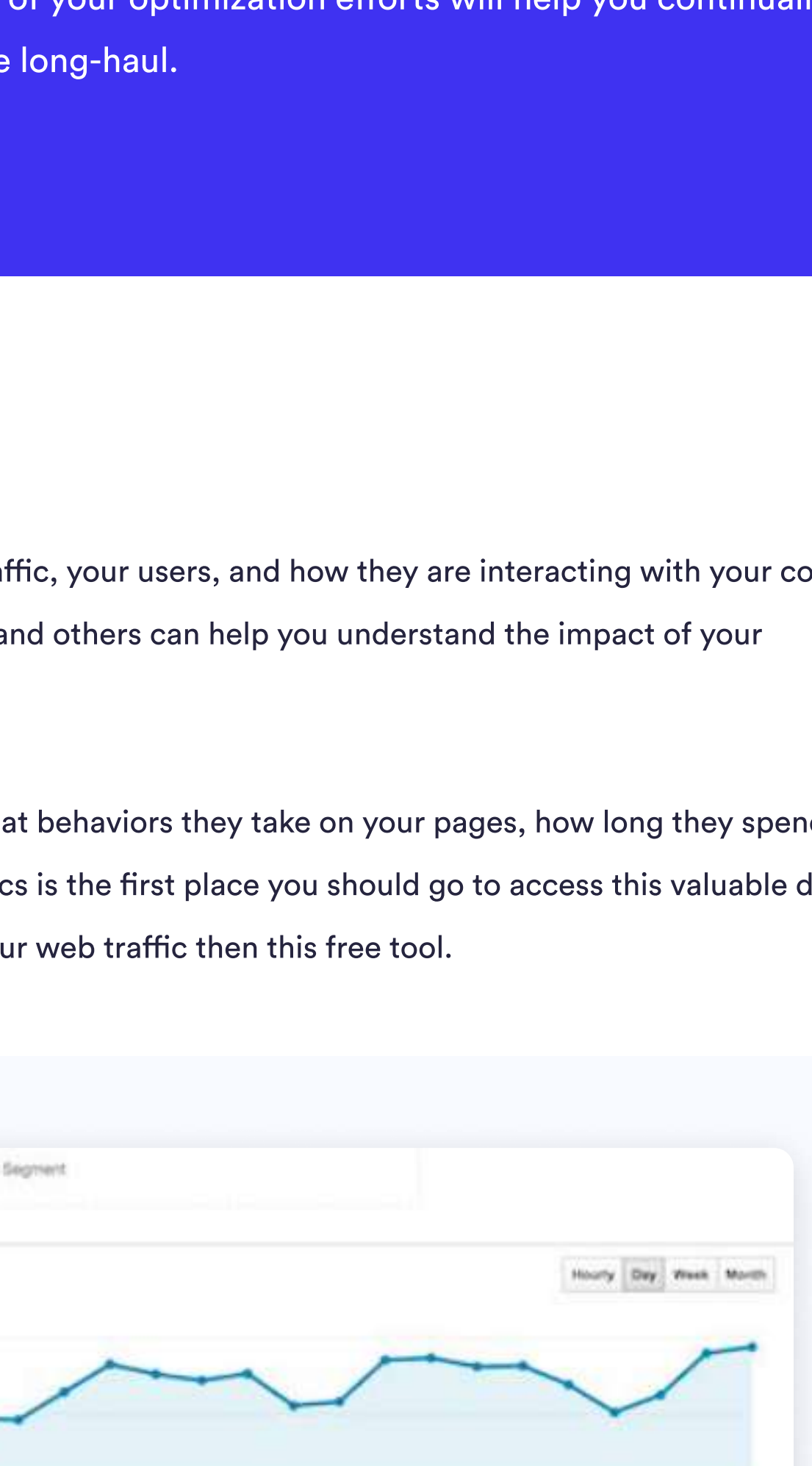
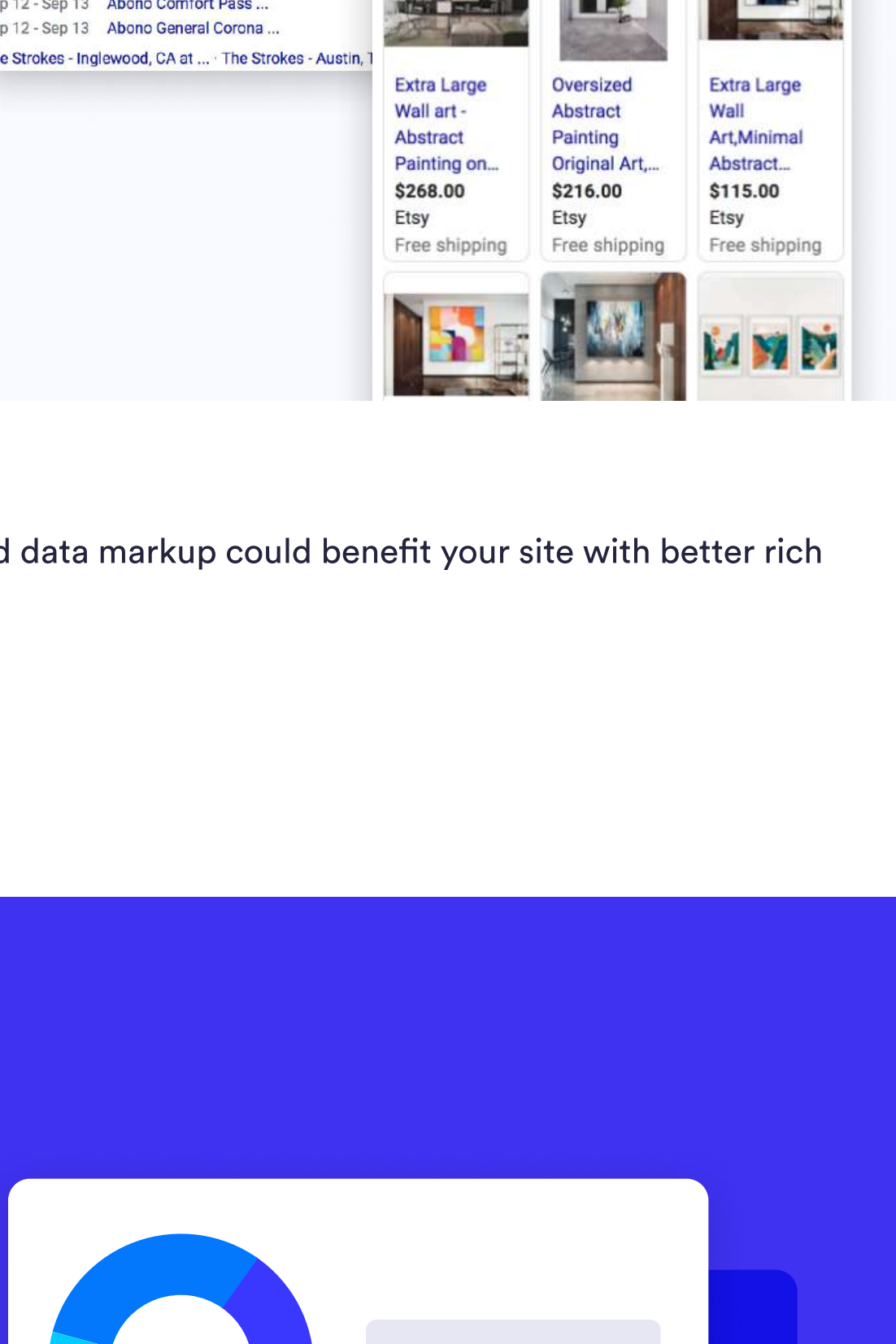
If you have landing pages on your site that have proved to drive traffic and convert, one of the best ways to capitalize on those pages is to include them in your sitemap.

A sitemap is an HTML page that lists all of the important pages on your website. It's good to be selective here and not include every page on your site - start with just the most important landing pages that you want to rank well. Submitting a sitemap is a way to help search engines crawl your site more efficiently.

For any website, there are bound to be pages that have more utilitarian purposes (log-ins, shopping carts, etc.) that don't bring value to every user. For this reason, helping search engines understand the hierarchy of your site has the benefits of guiding the traffic you get from search to the most valuable content your website offers.

Although there are tools to help you put a sitemap together, bringing in an SEO expert is a good idea with this crucial step. A properly engineered sitemap can work to your advantage by guiding organic traffic to the best performing pages on your site, like those that result in conversions or lead captures.

Using a sitemap is extremely important when you have a new site or are adding many new landing pages, as it keeps Google informed of the changes you've made and helps search engine bots crawl and index your site in a way that most benefits you.



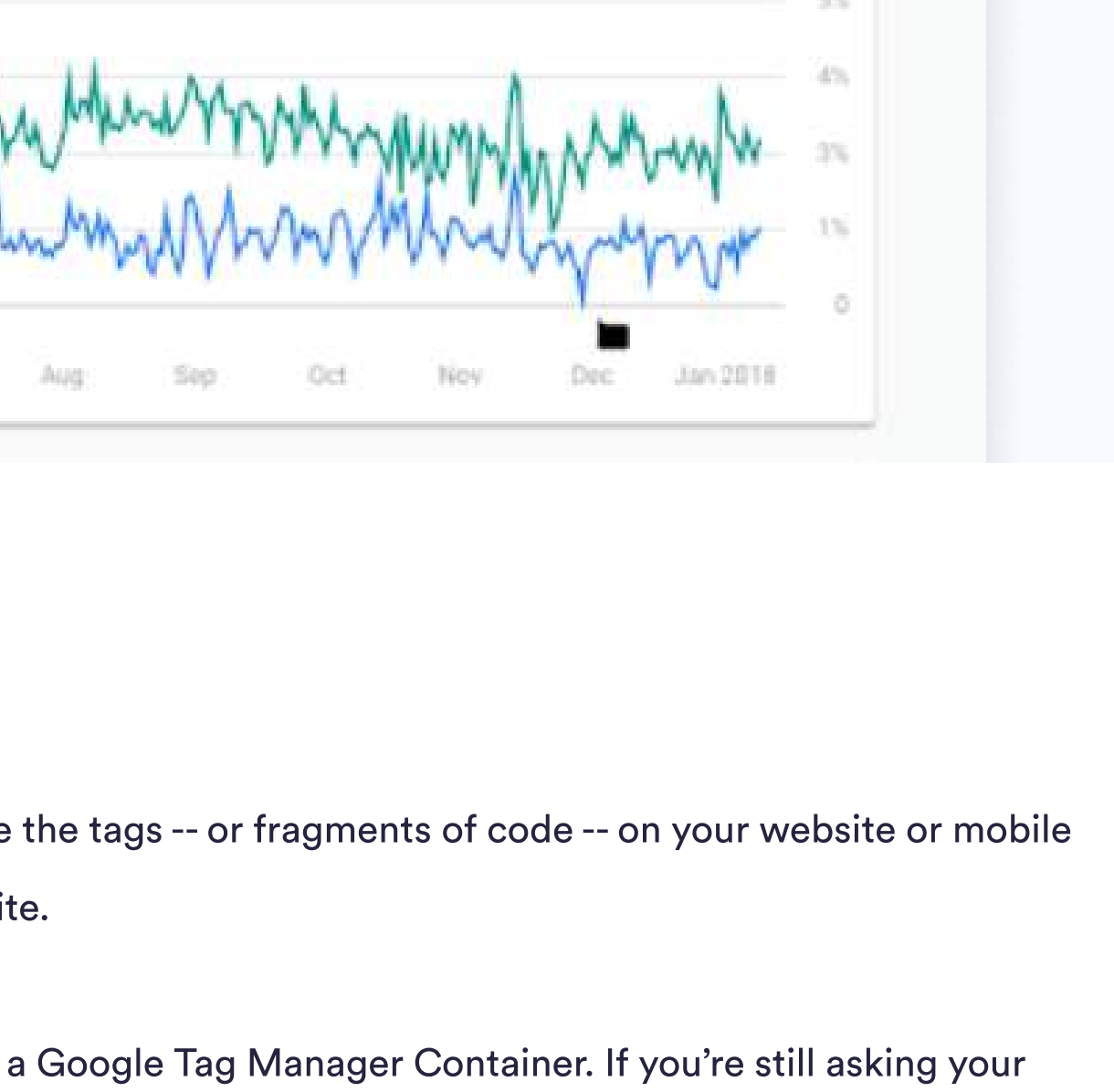
We could write a whole eBook about how to get the most of these powerful platforms, but we'll just mention them in passing here to make sure you have them setup and configured properly for your website.

Getting comfortable using and understanding the features of these essential tools will allow you to know whether your optimization efforts have been successful. Measuring the results of your optimization efforts will help you continually refine your strategy so you continue to experience growth for the long-haul.

Google Analytics

Google Analytics will provide you essential information about organic traffic, your users, and how they are interacting with your content. Metrics like CTR, page views, sessions, pages per session, bounce rate, and others can help you understand the impact of your optimization efforts and where you can improve.

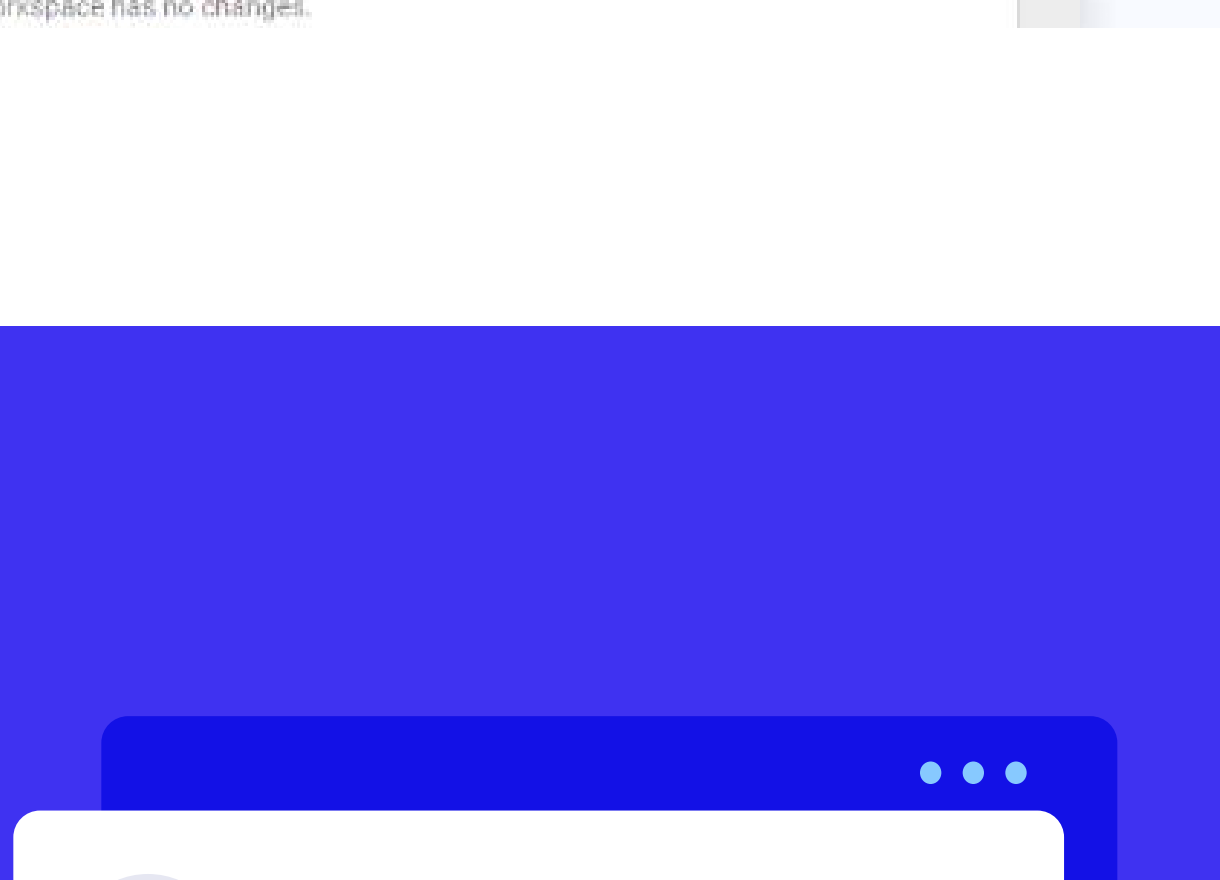
If you want to understand your site visitors' browsing experience, like what behaviors they take on your pages, how long they spend on specific pages, and at what moment they leave your site, Google Analytics is the first place you should go to access this valuable data. From an SEO perspective, there are no better insights available about your web traffic than this free tool.



Google Search Console

GSC is a platform designed to help you improve your website's performance in search engine results. With GSC, you can submit sitemaps, access crawling and indexing data, and improve your mobile usability. GSC provides rich insights into how to improve your rankings, alerts you to problems or issues, and helps you better understand how Google understands your website content overall.

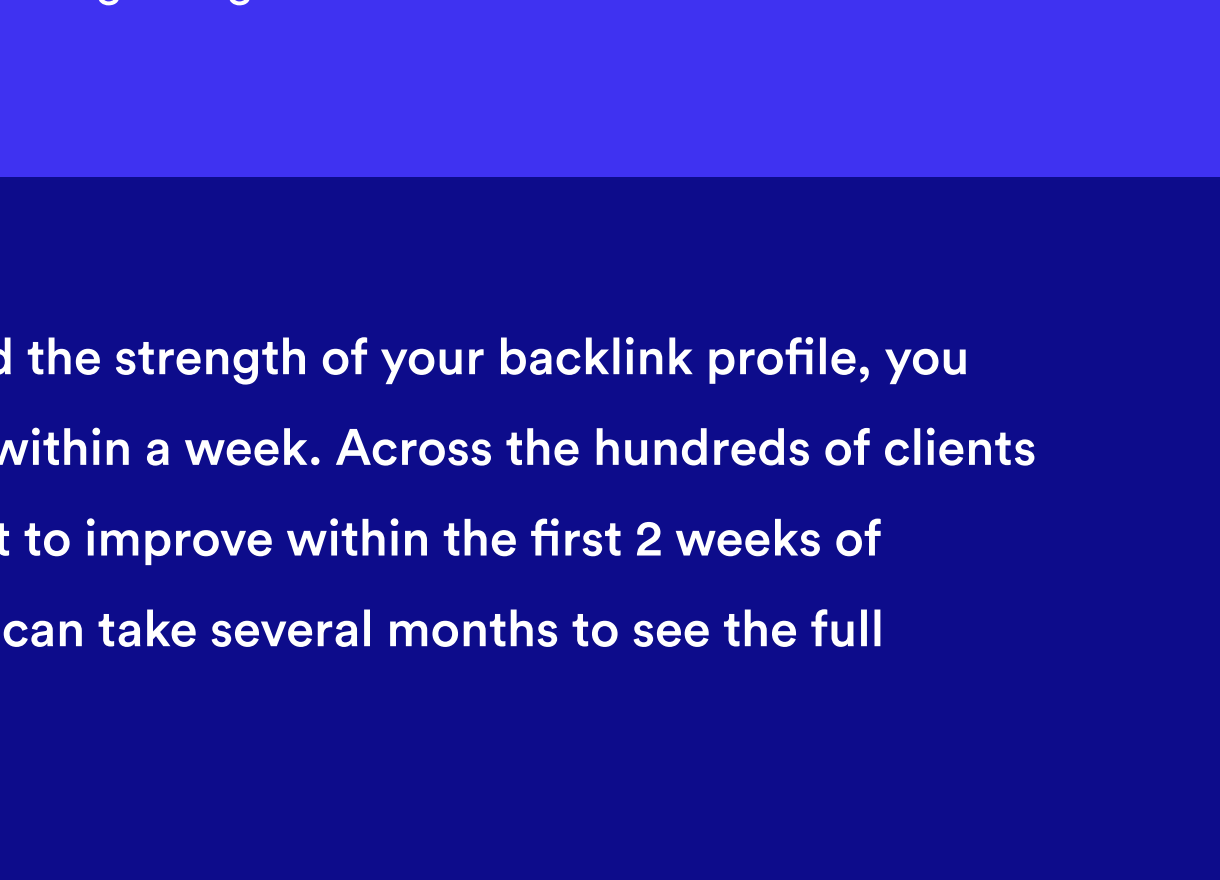
Google Search Console is the only source of truth for your keyword rankings on the internet. If you want to know what the Google rankings are for your website up-to-the-day, this is the platform that will help you make granular changes and do the performance benchmarking and A/B testing necessary to maximize your on-page optimizations to produce maximum results.



Google Tag Manager

Google Tag Manager is a management system that allows you to manage the tags -- or fragments of code -- on your website or mobile app. The platform is a great beginner's guide to using tags on your website.

All of your marketing pixels and Javascript code should be hosted inside a Google Tag Manager Container. If you're still asking your development team to add new vendor libraries for analytics or measurement, it's time to migrate to GTM. GTM is the gold standard for high performance marketing teams who iterate quickly. Since GTM is free, there's really no reason not to be using it.



“Depending on the competitiveness of your niche and the strength of your backlink profile, you may be able to start seeing traction in your rankings within a week. Across the hundreds of clients we have worked with, we generally see rankings start to improve within the first 2 weeks of implementing landing page improvements, though it can take several months to see the full benefits of your hard work.”

- MANICK BHAN, CTO OF LINKGRAPH

Reasons your Content might not be Ranking

So after you do the initial work of optimizing your content and measure your performance in KPIs, you will most likely see some encouraging results. However, if you don't see yourself ranking for your target keywords, or your existing pages aren't currently ranking, it's time to determine where your optimization efforts can be better implemented.

Target Keyword is too Competitive

It's important to be realistic about the keyword difficulty you should be targeting in your keyword research. If you're a brand new site with no backlinks, you're not going to be able to rank on the first page of Google for any keywords with an Organic Difficulty greater than 20, no matter how in-depth, comprehensive, and useful your content is. For more competitive keywords, you'll need to improve your Site Authority by building backlinks from high quality, relevant sites.

For more competitive keywords, you'll need to improve your Site Authority by building backlinks from high quality, relevant sites. Even then, if your competitors have multiple referring domains and are well-established, there are no guarantees that backlinks alone will get you to page one. This is why keyword selection must be realistic. As your site grows with authoritative content, backlinks, and search engine traffic, you can shift your keyword optimization to focus on those more competitive keywords in your industry.

Content Score is too Low

On-page SEO is essential to search engine optimizing, but simply adding a few specific keywords into your headlines and h1 tags is not going to get any type of content onto the first page for the most competitive keywords. Even if you think your original content is fully optimized, our clients often plug in their existing landing page content into our content assistant tool to find that their content performance score is only in the 20s or 30s.

Regardless of the aesthetic quality or performance of your site, that kind of content is just unlikely to rank. As time passes, you should tweak and update your content so it continues to appear in relevant results. Remember, your competitors are likely trying to get a better rank for related keywords, so just because you earn a top search result for a few weeks doesn't mean your content types will stay there.

On-page SEO is a long-term strategy and not completed overnight. Keep revisiting your old content to think about how you can evaluate the entire topic and make it more comprehensive. Then you can do content promotion after your new updates, use it for additional lead generation, and continue the lifecycle of your content by continually using it in a new way.

Off-site Factors are Holding you Back

Off-site factors, specifically the authoritativeness and strength of your backlink profile, are some of the most powerful search factors that drive rankings. In competitive niches where you're trying to rank against authoritative domains with very mature backlink profiles, it can be challenging for new entrants to displace incumbent sites.

Although there are tools to help you put a sitemap together, bringing in an SEO expert is a good idea with this crucial step. A properly engineered sitemap can work to your advantage by guiding organic traffic to the best performing pages on your site, like those that result in conversions or lead captures.

Using a sitemap is extremely important when you have a new site or are adding many new landing pages, as it keeps Google informed of the changes you've made and helps search engine bots crawl and index your site in a way that most benefits you.

Add Lead Captures to Pages with High Traffic but Low Conversions

If you have a web page that starts to get organic traffic but doesn't include some kind of lead capture form or call-to-action (CTA), you are missing an opportunity to see increased ROI on your optimization efforts. A refined content strategy prioritizes conversions, as they help turn your increased site traffic into revenue.

Target Under-Performing Content toward Less Competitive Search Queries

By re-optimizing content to target less competitive keywords, content optimizers have the opportunity to go after new search queries without the work of creating an entirely new long-form landing page or blog post.

You should be monitoring whether or not the content you create is ranking for the original target keywords. If not, consider a new keyword and reevaluate at a later date. But be careful with this strategy. Often, your pages may start ranking for keywords you didn't expect but that still bring valuable traffic to your site.

07

After you Optimize: How to Keep Driving Traffic and Conversions

Increased organic traffic is a major goal of optimization, but the ultimate end-goal is driving traffic to your website that actually converts.

Although creating new content for more keyword phrases will always be on your content marketers' to-do lists, taking the time to update and capitalize on existing content, particularly those landing pages that have accumulated backlinks, earn traffic, and capture leads, can be a quick, easy way to turn your optimization efforts into increased traffic and revenue.



Although there are tools to help you put a sitemap together, bringing in an SEO expert is a good idea with this crucial step. A properly engineered sitemap can work to your advantage by guiding organic traffic to the best performing pages on your site, like those that result in conversions or lead captures.

Using a sitemap is extremely important when you have a new site or are adding many new landing pages, as it keeps Google informed of the changes you've made and helps search engine bots crawl and index your site in a way that most benefits you.

Add Lead Captures to Pages with High Traffic but Low Conversions

If you have a web page that starts to get organic traffic but doesn't include some kind of lead capture form or call-to-action (CTA), you are missing an opportunity to see increased ROI on your optimization efforts. A refined content strategy prioritizes conversions, as they help turn your increased site traffic into revenue.

Target Under-Performing Content toward Less Competitive Search Queries

By re-optimizing content to target less competitive keywords, content optimizers have the opportunity to go after new search queries without the work of creating an entirely new long-form landing page or blog post.

You should be monitoring whether or not the content you create is ranking for the original target keywords. If not, consider a new keyword and reevaluate at a later date. But be careful with this strategy. Often, your pages may start ranking for keywords you didn't expect but that still bring valuable traffic to your site.

Let Backlinks be your Guide

If you have a web page that starts to accumulate backlinks, that's your hint that users have found the content of that page to be valuable and higher quality. If a page with multiple backlinks starts losing traffic overtime, you can put that content back to work by updating the content every 6-12 months.

Repairing broken links, revising outdated information, or expanding on the topic with more detail and depth can put that content back to work for you. Just make sure that you never delete pages that have backlinks or high PageRank, so as not to lose any valuable [link juice](#).

Content Pruning: Delete content that's underperforming

All content creation takes work, which is why some webmasters hesitate to delete any content from their sites. Although it's best practice to have a variety of landing pages and blog posts on your website, pages that aren't getting traffic or ranking are just taking up valuable pagerank and crawl budget. They should either be re-optimized for a less competitive keyword or removed entirely. For some sites with a large number of low value pages, pruning pages can actually improve your SEO and rankings on other pages.

If you don't want to delete a page entirely, you can make it invisible by utilizing a [301 redirect](#). You can use the redirect to automatically send users to related, or better performing content. If you don't have a piece of content that can serve as a good substitute for the page, then it's best to use a [410 Deleted](#) status to communicate that the url is gone permanently.

When should you Re-Optimize your Content?

As your site grows over time, search trends and algorithms will change. The keywords that brought you traffic a year ago may become more competitive, or the blog content that once seemed "fresh," may go stale. In Google's massive index of all content, stale content unfortunately has a short shelf-life.

Most content marketers strive to make "evergreen content" for this reason, or web pages that stand the test of time and work to drive traffic for the long haul. But the truth is, older blog posts and landing pages will always lose some of their SEO strength unless they are kept up-to-date, relevant, and appear to be updated regularly.

08

The Best Content Optimization Tools

There are a variety of content assistant tools available to site owners and more popping up every single day. Not all of these tools have the same features or are as helpful for your workflow and topic optimization. When it comes to finding the best tool, UI/UX, real-time data to measure content performance score, and accurate keyword suggestions are all essential to achieving a successful on-page SEO strategy. Here are our favorite SEO tools for writing and optimizing content.



#1: LinkGraph's Landing Page Optimizer

LinkGraph's content assistant tool allows you to optimize for up to 5 keywords, a key differentiator between other SEO content tools. In addition to showing you key focus terms that will help your pages rank higher, you can see the search volume and CPC of keywords as well as the overall word count of your SEO content. The tool also shows you the top ranking urls that you can use as topic models or great examples of what it takes to rank. You can plug in your existing landing pages or content types and work from there, or use the tool to create new pages of content for your site.

Our software crawls both the visible content and invisible metadata of the top ranking organic results for the exact keyword the user is attempting to rank for. Our content performance score gives users an idea of how Google views their existing content in comparison to those top results. By adding in the focus terms -- or keyword suggestions -- that the content assistant provides, you can improve your content rank for relevant keywords and queries. You can also easily export your piece of content into Google Docs with the useful tool. When it comes to improving your on-site SEO, LinkGraph's landing page optimizer has a strong record of producing quick, tangible results.

#2: Marketmuse Content Briefs

Marketmuse uses artificial intelligence to crawl similar content for your target keyword and generate a Marketmuse content brief that you can use as a plan or outline for your content. For those content creators who want to take the guesswork out of h1 tags or page titles, or don't have time to do research for a specific topic, Marketmuse creative briefs can save you time by providing an SEO template for any new page you want to create for your site.

Regardless of the content topics on your editorial calendar, the Marketmuse content brief can be an effective way to simplify on-site SEO and on-page factors. Although there are many aspects to creating a high-quality piece of content, like inbound links and outbound links, main topics and subtopics, h1 tags and page titles, rich media and video content, as well as a solid understanding of what your target audience finds valuable, the Marketmuse content brief can be a useful, straightforward place to get started.

#3: Brightedge Content IQ

Brightedge content IQ allows users to perform a content audit of their own website. For larger sites that have hundreds to thousands of landing pages, a routine content audit should be a regular part of your website maintenance. Google will penalize websites for common issues like duplicate content, thin product pages, poor performance, and more, so a content audit is a great place to start to understand the working of basic functionalities of the website.

With Brightedge Content IQ, you can evaluate a single page, a homepage, or the entirety of your website, and have the data you need to improve your marketing strategy. Once you repair those technical problems or content issues on your website, you can start to regain keyword rankings and avoid Google penalties in the future

Other Helpful Content Tools

In addition to content and topic optimization, there are other aspects of content creation that need attention in search engine optimizing. Whether you're creating blog posts, ebooks, or infographics, these additional tools and widgets will help give you a strategic edge.

— [Hemingway Editor](#)

When it comes to writing readable sentences, the Hemingway editor can assist content creators by identifying errors in grammar, syntax or sentence structure. Google wants to provide quality, readable content to searchers, and a common issue why some content doesn't rank is the lack of sentence-level quality. One of the first things a site owner can do to improve their content is simply to improve the quality and readability of the writing. This has positive ripple effects that benefit other metrics of your site, such as conversion rate optimization, increased social shares, and increased featured snippets in search results.

— [Buzzsumo](#)

When it comes to planning your editorial calendar, Buzzsumo is a platform that gives you insights into content performance across social media channels. You can use the platform to research ideas for your editorial calendar and discover high-performing content that can be used as a case study for your own content creation. If your large or small business has a strong social media presence, this is a great tool for measuring your content performance across all social media channels, like Twitter, Facebook, LinkedIn and Reddit. You can also use Buzzsumo to reach out to other online publishers and find opportunities to pitch and place the content you create.

— [Keyword Tools](#)

As mentioned earlier, a main reason content doesn't always rank is because the chosen single keyword is too competitive. Accurate keyword tools are vitally important then to understand the realistic opportunities your related pages have for ranking in the SERPs. Tools like Google's keyword planner can help site owners understand user intent and which keywords will bring the most relevant traffic.

LinkGraph, semrush, Clearscope, Moz, ahrefs, and cognitiveseo all have tools that resemble Google keyword planner and can help you determine the best keyword choices for your SEO efforts and online advertising. The data through which they determine their keyword difficulty scores can vary though, so it is best to use tools like LinkGraph's that rely on real-time data directly from Google. If you're a small business and need help identifying your target audience or the ideal keywords, digital marketers can help you understand the most important ranking factors and keyword analytics to consider.

The right audience for your content may be smaller, but the good news is that niche audiences often have higher search intent, which may mean less traffic, but more often means more conversions for your website. For every new page you publish on your site, you should have a new keyword target in order to improve your appearance for semantic search terms that show search intent for products or services like yours. Most of the previously mentioned keyword tools have a free trial for first time users, so you can experiment with multiple keyword tools and filter out the ones that best meet the needs of your large or small business.

09

Final Thoughts on Optimization

SEO is one of the most cost-effective ways for you to experience growth and increased ROI with your digital marketing efforts. When your website ranks in the top spots for SERPs, you build brand credibility, capture more leads, and increase your market share. Although it takes consistency and investment, the rewards for your brand can be long-lasting promotion and a steady influx of leads.



After reading this guide, you should have the necessary tools and procedures to strategize, optimize, and refine your on-page strategy. If you need help diagnosing which on-page optimizations your website should prioritize, consider doing an [on-site SEO audit](#).

At LinkGraph, we have a [blog and learning center](#) that provides various nuanced guides about both on-site and off-site tactics. Our experts are always willing to [chat](#) about your website and revenue goals. We believe that SEO should be for everyone, and can't wait to see how your website grows.