

Why your small business should be making use of SEO

 By [Sophie Baker](#)

24 Feb 2015

Sophie Baker of Biz4Afrika speaks to Casson Media, experts in search engine optimisation (SEO) and web design, to get their tips on how your small business can and should make use of SEO...

Casson Media explains why user experience is key, and how best to implement SEO if you are a start-up or SME owner?

Q: Can you explain exactly what SEO is?

A: If we knew, Google would hunt us down! SEO is no longer about JUST optimising a page for Google and hoping for the best. Today, SEO is more about strategy and understanding what the user wants as well as what keeps Google happy. By optimising your website and creating a good user experience that is relevant to the user, you will indirectly increase your ranking as many of the modern ranking handles are now associated with user experience. Google wants the user to have a good experience on your website that is both relevant to their search query as well as fast, visual and accessible on all devices.

Q: Why is it useful for SMEs? Isn't SEO mostly for big organisations?

A: SEO is for everyone. By creating a good user experience for your visitors, you then in turn create trust and conversions on your website. The average user converts if he likes what he sees on your website and trusts your services on a first impression. If you can create an environment that is easy to navigate and is structured so that both Google and the user can easily tell which products or services matter to you, this will lead to conversions no matter what industry you are in.



Q: What are the most important things for small business owners and entrepreneurs to understand about SEO?

A: SEO is not a quick fix-it-all solution and should never be used by itself. It is important to use social media, Google AdWords (paid advertising) and YouTube to promote your products and services. Google AdWords and YouTube advertising can show instant results, whereas SEO and social media take many months to become effective as you begin to understand the buying process of your user.

Q: How can SMEs best utilise SEO easily and effectively?

A: Make sure the SEO company you choose to help you is known and respected within the industry. There are far too many fly-by-night SEO companies in South Africa. Most reputable SEO companies in South Africa know each other and respect each other. In most cases they share best practices between each other. If you are looking at Google AdWords then make sure that the company is Google Partner Certified, this shows that they have taken the exams for Google's products and therefore understand Google's products and how best to help you benefit from AdWords.

Q: What would be your top tip to optimize SEO when building a website from scratch for a small business?

A: Keep your website simple and to the point. Write your content in layman's terms so that users and potential customers can understand your products and services easily. Google is only as smart as the user searching.

Q: What is the biggest mistake you see people making when trying to use SEO?

A: Many people think that SEO is easy and they can simply read up and make changes themselves. Experts in the field have done thousands of hours of work, reading and analysing and have become who they are because of trial and error and work experience. By not understanding the process of SEO they feel hard done by when they do not see instant results. There is no quick fix to SEO, and it cannot be done once off. It takes hours and hours of analysis, trial and error to build a strategy for a company.

Q: Anything small business owners should particularly avoid in their SEO efforts?

A: Avoid SEO stereotypes. Google makes thousands of changes to their algorithm per year and nobody knows what the exact algorithm is, as an SEO expert we can only strive to know as many ranking factors as possible. DO NOT focus on link building and getting people to link to your website as this is an old fashioned SEO technique. Rather focus on user experience and content that is interesting to your user. The rest will all fall into place.

- Avoid fly-by-night SEO
- Avoid companies that promise ranking
- Avoid companies that sell you SEO based on the ranking of 10 or 20 keywords. Google will rank any given site on hundreds of keywords, not just a handful.

Do not get upset when a change does not get you to the top of the search results instantly. No change by itself is the magic solution. It takes more than 250 handles (titles, age, domain name, content etc) to determine ranking, just comply with as many as possible without compromising user experience.

ABOUT SOPHIE BAKER

Sophie Baker is the content producer at Biz4Afrika, a Microsoft-owned online hub providing help, information and networking opportunities for small businesses, through Content Studio.

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