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eCommerce SEO Checklist: How to optimise your online shop

Digital Ethos are committed to providing the best Digital Marketing services to any sized business. If you are selling your product or service online through a website, it is referred to as an electric commerce or eCommerce. ecommerce SEO shouldn't be neglected! There are many things to consider when selling on the internet and it is important to optimise your ecommerce site for SEO. Our Digital Marketing consultants have created a helpful checklist of what to consider when optimising your ecommerce site, for your customers and for Google.

Online Branding

Consistency is key. This should be a priority for an online business, whether you are selling goods or not. Your logo or brand should be built into your ecommerce site throughout, but it should be especially clear and visible on your homepage. This helps build brand exposure and promote your business. As your customers scroll through your ecommerce site, your branding helps to concrete trigger recognition.

Compelling Call to Action

It is important to have a compelling call to action on your homepage. This may change over time, with seasons and trends, for example if you want to promote products for Christmas you need to make sure it's easily visible and that it meets the needs and expectations of your visitors.

“Order Before 20th December for Free Christmas Delivery”

Featured Products

As well as an eye-catching call to action, you need to save space for a feature product, or something similar. This can be a core product that represents the business, or a promotional product on sale. This provides an immediate trigger for visitors, telling them instantly whether or not they are in the right place.

Don't have time to read our full guide? Check out our ecommerce SEO video on our blog post

Search Function

If your ecommerce website offers more than 20 products or services, you should display a search bar. It is important to have this in a visible place, usually in the header section. This allows users to navigate through the site looking for something of choice. As well as optimising your search option, you need to give the search result pages some attention, we'll explain more about that later.

The Why?

A [Simon Sinek](#) quote we always refer to at Digital Ethos is "People don't buy what you do; people buy why you do it".

That's why it is just as important to explain a little bit about your brand or business, who's behind the idea, what are your morals, what motivates the business? A customer is more likely to a) remember the brand, b) buy from that brand and c) repeat purchase if they can relate to 'the why'. Adding an about us page, and perhaps a team photo, will help build a connection between your company and your customers. [Monsoon](#) offer a really detailed and engaging about us page.

Shopping Basket

Regardless of your 'why', your goal most likely is to make money and you can't do that without a shopping cart. For this reason alone, your shopping cart should be visible and accessible throughout your ecommerce site. You want to make it easy for your customers to part with their cash, have a recognisable icon that they are used to seeing.

Captivating Content

Newsletters or social media feeds are popular ways to promote your brand and get return visits from your customers, so be sure to draw attention to your social profiles and newsletter signup throughout your ecommerce site. Add your social profiles to your footer at least (use recognisable icons, links, social widgets), but if you have space left in your header, that would also be a great spot for them. Promote your newsletter in your sidebar and use scroll triggered boxes to draw attention to it. A nice giveaway always helps motivate people to subscribe.

"Sign up and receive £5 off your next order"

Organised Categories

Your categories should make sense to any visitor, they need to be accessible and organised. Categories help visitors to find groups of

products as quickly as possible, especially those who aren't sure which specific products to buy. Amazon has a large list of categories (or departments), whilst making the kind of products a category contains as clear as possible. Naming your categories sensible names and using categories and sub categories to organise them is a logical place to start. It is important to consider the user experience and their buying journey, put yourself in the place of your visitors and go over your shop's categories. Do they make sense? Are these the terms a visitor would use? If the answer is no, consider doing more research.

Introductory content

As well as clearly stating what the category is, it is useful to have a clear and concise introduction to that page. Explain what the category is, what products it entails and some helpful information about something similar. This not only informs the user, but it tells search engines more information about your ecommerce site. Using your category pages as cornerstone content pages are a great way to internally link your website. For example, Rare Tea Company have many category pages introducing [premium tea](#), whilst linking to other types of tea.

Product thumbnails

An image can speak a thousand words, especially one you are trying to sell. Be sure to capture the perfect image of your product and display the thumbnail to encourage users to click on that product. Good thumbnail images make it easier for visitors to choose from a wide variety of products in category or search result pages.

More Calls to Action

Besides having killer product thumbnails, your overview pages also need a call to action for each product and that means the ability for a visitor to add that product to their cart right from the category or search result page. Although it isn't always possible for every product, you should do this wherever you can. Some ecommerce sites allow users to choose the colour and size of a product, for example, without having to go to the product page. Choose, click add to cart and proceed to checkout Easy!

Product images

Would you hand over your money for a product if you didn't know what it looked like? Probably not. You should use high quality, realistic images for every product. Give as much detail as you can, zoom, turn, different colours and size guides. Remember to name the filename, the ALT text and the

description of the product image to help the SEO of your ecommerce website.

Product Description

Optimising your category pages is usually a lot easier than optimising all of your product pages, because there is less of them. If you're selling coffee accessories, coffee machines and spare parts, adding a unique and descriptive product description to each page is a lot of work, but it will be worth it. This allows the actual product page to rank for certain terms. If your ecommerce site is built using WordPress or Magento, there are helpful plugins that allow for mass optimisation for thousands of product and product pages.

Schema Markup

Schema markup is the next step to optimising your product descriptions. It allows for both your customers and Google shopping to better understand the contents of your product page. You can add detailed schemas that include more relevant information.

OpenGraph and Twitter Cards

As well as being able to read about your product, it is important to make it visually appealing. It is important to add OpenGraph and Rich Cards to your ecommerce website. This means that when people share your products, it is displayed beautifully.

Get the Price Right

This is possibly one of the most important elements of your ecommerce website. Be clear and upfront about exactly how the product will cost. If you surprise shoppers with added costs at the checkout, you will see customers abandoning their purchase. Be sure to include pricing information before they begin the checkout process, as this can often be a turnoff.

5* Reviews

Customers are x10 more likely to buy a product if it is recommended to them by someone else, we all trust our peers. One thing to remember with your ecommerce website is to allow customers to leave feedback and reviews. Whether this means using a RSS feed from other third parties, or allowing customers to leave feedback on the page. Shout about your positive reviews and harness the good feedback.

Customers Also Bought...

Customers are unique, but they do share similar interests and tastes. Take advantage of that and recommend other products that you think your customer might be interested in. For example if someone buys a coffee cup from your site, the chances are they might want some coffee. Adding related products to the bottom of the page encourages your audience to explore further into the site.

Another Call to Action

Once your audience land on the desired product page, you need to tell them what to do. Make the purchase button as clear as possible, encourage them to start the purchase journey. Don't try and trick them by disguising it, you want to make this part of the page stand out. This is especially true when you also have a secondary call to action like 'Add to wish list'. Making sure that Add to Cart button stands out the most and is the largest and first major button on your product page is absolutely essential.

Payment Options

It is important that this wheel turns smoothly. If your customers are going to abandon their care at any time, they will do it now. Prevent surprises and make it a smooth and easy process. There is nothing more annoying than getting to the end of the checkout process, only to find that your preferred payment option isn't available.

This is especially true if your eCommerce shop is in the EU, it is now a legal requirement to display your accepted payment methods to customers before they get to the checkout.

SSL and Website Security

Would you trust a website if it wasn't secure? Most potential customers would be deterred by seeing an eCommerce site that wasn't secured. If your eCommerce site isn't secure, you could be losing out on a high percentage of potential customers.

Having an SSL certificate created trust, your URL will display a padlock when your visitors are browsing the site. This tells your customers they are shopping in a secure environment, meaning their payment and personal information is kept safe. You can add additional security seals to your eCommerce site to further build trust.

Stock Display

Your stock drives sales, if a visitor can't checkout a product they want to purchase, the sales funnel is broken. Online shopping is becoming more popular than physical brick and mortar stores. The only benefit of physical stores is that a customer can see exactly what is on the shelf in front of them.

If you tell a customer there is a product available, customers will expect to be able to purchase it. It is really important you keep your ecommerce site up to date with relevant stock and units.

If your ecommerce site is running low on stock, don't remove the products, just notify your customers. If your product or service is great, they might stick around and wait for it. If it is not clear whether your stock is available or not, it also reflects badly on your brand image.

Checkout as a Guest

You should allow your customers to checkout without forcing them to create an account. It can deter potential visitors if they are forced to create an account and sign up before making a purchase. You should encourage them to sign up with customer perks, like newsletters or offers.

Customer logins are helpful when managing recurring payments or license renewals, it is not essential for all types of transactions.

AMP

Accelerated mobile pages means that your website looks amazing on both desktop, table and mobile phone screens. Mobile users are overtaking desktop users when it comes to online shopping, so it is important to cater to their needs. This means looking at user experience, usability and functionality. You should check menus display correctly, checkout function works, and the products are visible. Check out how we [optimise website for mobile](#) here.

Ecommerce Website Speed

No one wants to wait around for a website to load, whether you are browsing on a mobile or a desktop. People are consuming information on the go and don't have time to hang around on a slow ecommerce website.

Site speed is becoming a hefty slice of the pie in Google's ranking algorithm, ranking faster websites higher than slower. Unstable, your ecommerce site could be loading thousands of products and images, across multiple categories or breadcrumbs. But there are lots of things you

can do to optimise the speed of your website, from compressing images and reducing the amount of wasted scripts.

Meta Data

As previously mentioned, it is important to have product descriptions, it is also just as important to have meta data. Ecommerce sites in particular need meta titles, descriptions and keywords. Your meta data live behind the scenes (in the back-end of the website), but it is visible to both your visitors and to Google. Meta data for ecommerce websites tells search engines like Google to communicate important information on each page.

This isn't an exhaustive list for ecommerce SEO. This list could be as long as Google's algorithms, but you'd be here a very long time. Over time, this list will need updating with new tips as search engines continue to learn.

The chances are your ecommerce website and product pages don't have enough product information or contain enough detail about your brand or customer service. If you don't have time to optimise your ecommerce site, our SEO experts are here to support. Alternatively, if you'd like an [SEO audit](#) of your current site, we'd be happy to take a look. We can support with end-to-end ecommerce SEO, or ad-hock tasks like product-focused meta descriptions. Please [get in touch](#) today!