In this e-book, we’re going to share with you everything you need to know about getting real customers online. We’re going to teach you how to use SEO to get a recurrent stream of free commercial traffic, whether you’re selling online or own a local business.

**What is SEO? Why is it important?**

SEO stands for search engine optimization. Essentially, it’s using a specific set of keywords in various areas of your site. It tells major search engines like Google and Bing what your site is about, and is the first critical component of getting free commercial traffic.

Search traffic is more specific than social traffic, and much more likely to have a commercial intent. In other words, when someone searches for a product or service online, there’s a better chance they’re looking to buy something than just looking for information.

Getting your site optimized for search engine performance is like telling Google, “Send traffic to my site when they’re searching for these keywords.” The reputation you build with major search engines is only as good as your SEO.

For example, a keyword describing your product or service might get searched 10,000 times per month. On average, 40% of search traffic goes to the first natural listing, which means 4,000 potential customers visiting your site at no cost to you. Compare that to an average cost of $1 per click for ads, and you can really see the value of effective SEO.

Fair warning however that this doesn’t simply mean loading your pages with various keywords that relate to your products and services. Keywords are ideally thoroughly researched for demand and competition, and placed in specific areas, such as page titles and descriptions, meta tags, image file names and more.

The first most important aspect of this is that your keywords should be clear and definite. Otherwise, your site won’t be deemed by Google as an authority in any specific niche. At worst, doing this wrong is also a sign of spam, or attempts to fool the search engines with false and misleading information.

**Step-by-step guide to optimizing your site for SEO**

**Step One: Keyword Research**

In order to achieve perfect SEO, you need a definite list of keywords. First and foremost, choose keywords with commercial intent. Use your best judgment to determine whether someone who types in a particular keyword is wanting to buy something, or simply wanting information.

For example, someone using the words ‘best’ or ‘review’ are more likely looking for information. If they’re searching for just the type of product or service, they’re more likely looking to make a purchase. Also avoid brand names like ‘Sony’ or ‘Walmart.’

The ideal tool for keyword research is the Google Keyword Planner. Simply type in a word that describes your product or service, and it’ll tell give you a list of the most relevant keywords for your list.

On the right-hand side is the most important data about a particular keyword, which is the demand and a general competition. Demand is represented as monthly searches for each term.

However, in order to get exact data, you need to have an active Google Ads account, so it’s not exactly a free tool. Useful alternatives include Keywords Everywhere, as well as search suggestions like those find on Pinterest searches.

Generally, you should choose keywords that have high demand and low competition values. To get a better idea of the true competition for each keyword, search for that keyword and Google and look at the results. How many high-quality small business sites like yours show up in the search results?

Another way to identify the level of competition is to use a specific Google search command. Typing allintitle: “keyword” will show you how many pages Google has indexed, that use that specific keyword in the page title.

SEO quality is another critical component of competitive analysis. Using the information in this guide, you’ll be able to determine whether your competition is perfectly optimized for SEO. In most cases, you’ll be able to outperform them in that category when you have this information.

When using this particular technique, pages that have less than 100,000 pages indexed with that specific keyword in the title are idea. This means you’re much more likely to rank first place for that keyword, which is the link that most of the organic search traffic clicks on. Very important.

Other factors to consider, which are also covered in this guide, include page loading speed, overall quality of the site, content and images and their ordering process. Create a list of existing sites for each keyword you want to rank for, and rate them from one to five in terms of competitive value.

**Step Two: Organize Your Keywords**

Keyword research is a process that can become very advanced, but it doesn’t have to be. In the previous step, you compiled a list of commercial keywords that are specifically related to your products and services. Now it's time to create a keyword list for each page of your site.

There are different keywords for different purposes. For example, each page of your site should have a root keyword that is different and unique from the root keyword on each of the other pages. Each page should also have a list of supporting keywords, and we’ll teach you how to use them in the next section.

You’ll find that the most general keywords (fewest amount of words in the keyword, and least specific in terms of features) will have the highest demand and competition. Usually, it’s not worth trying to rank for these keywords on your commercial pages, but they make an ideal root keyword for your home page.

When selecting root keywords for each of your pages, they should be something that most accurately describes what’s on that page. Whether you’re selling products or services, each will have distinguishing features or characteristics that you can use different keywords for. If you have an online store with category pages, these should have their own root keyword as well.

Finally, create a unique list of supporting keywords for each of your pages. As you’ll see in the third step, these are used on your site to support your root keywords. You’ll also use them in your marketing later on.

**Step Three: Create Page Titles and Descriptions**

When you perform any Google search, each listing will have three main factors: a URL, a page title and a page description. Each of these elements have SEO value that you can use to your advantage.

However, you’re not just creating these elements for the search engines, and Google knows that. You need to write and organize these elements to contain your keywords, and clearly communicate to other people what your page contains.

The first element is the URL, more accurately called the **page name**. It’s composed of the words that come after the final forward slash ‘/’ in a URL. It’s also the page name that appears in the tabs at the top of any major web browser. In this case, you can simply use your root keyword for that page.

The **title meta tag** is the large blue, clickable text that appears as the page title in a Google listing. In this case, it’s also safe to simply use a root keyword, however it also allows you to plug in a secondary support keyword as well.

If you want to be selective about which keywords you use on each page, product pages should be higher priority. It’s more important to have multiple keywords for a product page title than a product category page title, because that’s where customers make purchases from.

No matter what title you choose, your root keyword should be at the beginning of the title. This tells the search engines that this is the most important part of the page, and what kind of traffic they should send to it. An effective format for a title meta tag is:

Root Keyword | Secondary Keyword

The first important formatting detail here is that title meta tags can contain a maximum of 55 characters. Going over this will result in your page title trailing off in search listings, which looks unprofessional and can hurt your rankings.

We also use a ‘|’ (pressing shift + forward slash ‘\’) to separate the keywords, and there’s a very important reason for that. If you simply wrote your root keyword followed by your secondary keyword, that would appear to Google as one long keyword, and would ruin your SEO potential.

Other keyword separation options include a comma, period, colon, semicolon, dash and words like and, the, of and to. However, they must make grammatical sense, otherwise it’ll have a very negative impact on your site’s SEO value, because Google will see it as low quality. Keep in mind that words like ‘for’ are also used in some keywords, so they don’t work the same way as the ones listed here.

The **description meta tag** is the gray text that appears below the page title in a search listing. As you know, it’s used to both describe to people what’s on the page, and also tell Google what kind of traffic they should send to that page. In this case, you have a maximum of 155 characters before the description starts trailing off.

Again, your root keyword should appear at the beginning of the description, be separated from other text and it must make grammatical sense. You can also include one supporting keyword if it follows the SEO rules we’ve listed here, except that it would appear later on, usually in the second sentence of the description.

**Step Four: Write Actual Page Descriptions**

The actual page descriptions, also known as page body text, is what people see when they actually visit your site. Now you may be thinking, “I’ve already written descriptions for each of my pages.”

However, those descriptions were only 155 characters, and don’t include all of the features and sales psychology that they could. It’ll also benefit your SEO to have unique descriptions on this page.

This page body text should not be excessively long. In this case, it’s often better to work with a professional writer who knows sales psychology and how to appeal to your demographic. The better the text is here, the more sales you’ll ultimately generate when customers visit your site.

In terms of design, there may be genuine reasons to increase or decrease the length of the text here. Maybe you want to square it off so it matches the product photo for aesthetic purposes, or you just want more sales copy.

No matter what you choose, the same major SEO rules apply. The root keyword should appear at the beginning of the description, it must have perfect grammar, and effective keyword use is essential. This means using the proper words and characters to separate your keywords from the other parts of your text.

**Step Five: Cover All 10 of the On-Site SEO Positions**

We’ll explain in detail how and where to use your keywords across your entire site. In short though, here are all of the on-site SEO positions that will benefit your SEO to have proper keywords.

1. Title Meta Tag
2. Description Meta Tag
3. Page Name/URL
4. Header Text
5. Body Description Text
6. Alt Tags
7. Anchor Text
8. Breadcrumb Trail
9. Image Names
10. Navigation Links

The **title tag** is an element written into the HTML code for each page of your site. It appears in the header section like this:

<head>

<title>Keyword One | Keyword Two</title>

</head>

Some platforms like Shopify and WordPress will create that line of code for you when you enter the page title. If this is a little too technical, that’s okay. You can familiarize yourself with HTML without much trouble, use a platform that does this for you, or hire someone to complete this task for a custom site.

The **description meta tag** consists of the first unique description you wrote in the previous section, with up to 155 characters. It appears after the title tag in the HTML header like this:

<head>

<meta name=”description” content=”Keyword, description text.”>

</head>

Again, if you know how to do this for the title tag, you should know exactly how to do this. If not, either the platform you’re using or a support technical can take care of it within seconds.

The **page name** consists of the text appearing after the final ‘/’ of a URL. For example, in the URL keywordone.com/keyword-two/keyword-three, keyword three would be the page name. If it sounds complex, just remember to use the root keyword for that page as the page name to appear in the URL.

The **header text** for a page is another word for a title that actually appears as text that someone can see on your page. Using the same format as before, a great header text would consist of the ‘Keyword One | Keyword Two’ format.

The **body description text** is also text that appears on your actual site page. It consists of the second unique description that you wrote for each page in the previous section. It also might include a list of features, depending on how you choose to design your site.

**Alt tags** are an additional on-site SEO position that will help you with ranking your site pages. Without getting into the history and purpose of alt tags, they’re essentially text that appears when you hover your mouse over an image.

It’s essentially an element in the HTML code of your site that search engines will consider when ranking your site. It’s the actual code that tells the web page to display an image. An example in HTML code will look something like this, which is bolded here so you can see it:

<img src=”//cdn.website.com/files/images/keyword.jpg” **alt=”keyword”**>

**Anchor text** is what visibly appears on a page for a clickable link. For example, a clickable link might look like ‘click here,’ but in code actually exists as a URL. You can format anchor text to use a keyword in your HTML code like this, where the bolded part is the anchor text:

<a href=”website.com/keyword/”>**keyword**</a>

A **breadcrumb trail** is a feature that doesn’t appear on all websites, but it’s another effective position for on-site SEO. It’s essentially a way for visitors to know where they are on the site, and generally appears like this:

Home > Category > Product

The bolded ‘keyword’ part of the breadcrumb trail is an example where you could place a keyword, although it doesn’t have to be a product. It’s just an example, so it works for whatever kind of site and keywords you’re using.

Since we’re talking about SEO, we’re just going to show you the HTML part of this. Another web programming language called CSS is where you would style this and decide how you want it to appear on your website. The following example is a simple bit of code that might appear on one of the pages on your site.

<ul class=”breadcrumb”>

<li><a href=”#”>Home</a></li>

<li><a href=”#”>Category</a></li>

<li><a href=”#”>Keyword</a></li>

</ul>

An **image name** is something we’ve already seen in this section when we talked about alt tags. Using the same example as before, you can see where the image name is bolded in the following line of code:

<img src=”//cdn.website.com/files/images/**keyword.jpg**” alt=”keyword”>

Last but not least, **navigation links** are text that appear generally in the top section of a website. In this case, it can be valuable to use keywords as anchor text, which we discussed before, for your navigation text.

The difference with navigation links however, is that it might ruin the design of your site. If instead of writing ‘Articles,’ ‘Categories’ and ‘Products,’ you add keywords into each of those anchor texts, it could look unprofessional, especially if your keywords are excessively long. Use your best judgement in this case.

This completes the step-by-step guide to optimizing your site for SEO. There are only 10 elements here, but remember that this needs to be done correctly for every page of your site.

Even the non-commercial, or information-based pages, like the About Us section can include keywords. However, remember to keep the commercial parts of your site, the pages that are designed to sell a product or service, are kept commercially intent in terms of keywords.

**Checking your site for crawl errors, broken links and duplicate content**

As you know, the purpose of SEO is for Google to scan the HTML code and content of your site. This is how it determines what each page of your site is about and what kind of traffic to send to it.

However, what happens if google is unable to scan or ‘crawl’ your site? Not only is it not categorized and ranked in the search engines, it can actually have a negative impact on your entire site.

For this, we’re going to need the Google Search Console. This is a tool created by Google that shows you the performance of your site in the search engine, including page ranking, crawl status and a lot of other useful information.

In fact, part of optimizing your site for SEO is adding and verifying your site in the Search Console. This will speed up how quickly Google crawls and indexes your site, and allow you access to the tools we’ll be discussing in this section.

**Adding Web Properties and Submitting Your Sitemap**

Sign into the Search Console using your Google account, and select Add Property. Because Google indexes http: and https: domains differently, add your site using both of these, if your site supports both.

Once you’ve added and verified your site, add your sitemap next. Google has full tutorials on how to do all of this, but you’re essentially adding a sitemap to your own website to make it easier to crawl. This will ultimately improve your rankings and also allow you to ask Google not to index certain pages, such as a shopping cart, 404 page or private sections of a site.

**Finding and Resolving Crawl Errors and Broken Links**

Google Search Console has some different sections that will be useful to you overall, including Search Appearance, Search Traffic, Google Index and Crawl. We’re going to be focusing on the Crawl section in order to find crawling and URL/link errors that are preventing your pages from ranking and getting free traffic.

Crawl errors come several forms, including DNS, server, internal link, external link and malware errors. DNS and server errors typically deal with your hosting, which means that Google was unable to access your site altogether. One of the best ways to prevent these issues is using a reputable hosting service for your domain.

Another possible reason for these errors is that your site isn’t loading quickly enough, which is an issue we’ll cover in the next section.

**Malware errors** are related to security. This is one of the main reasons most sites have an https version of their site. Many hosting companies will sell you things like SSL security, and your site won’t typically experience these issues if your security is up to date.

If you’ve asked Google not to index private and irrelevant pages like your shopping cart page, it will show up as a **Robots.txt error**. In these instances, it’s intentional and at worst the file needs to be configured properly.

If this happens on a page you want to rank in the search engines, it needs to be fixed. One possible fix is looking for the robots.txt file for that page and remove it from your sitemap. You don’t need a robots.txt file for any page you intend to index, except for specialized reasons.

If for some reason you’re using it intentionally, make sure it’s configured properly and remove the “Disallow:/" command from the file.

**URL errors** affect specific pages on your website, and Google will tell you specifically which URLs they are. You can inspect each one of the URLs in that list that contain one of the following errors.

* Server Error
* DNS Error
* Soft 404
* 404
* Access Denied
* Not Followed

A **soft 404** is where you either have a broken link, or a link that points to a non-existent page and redirects to something other than a 404 page. You can either fix the link by replacing it with the correct URL, use a 301 redirect to the correct page or set your site up to redirect only to a 404 or 410 code, not your home page or another page.

**404 errors** occur when a link points to an unpublished page or a non-existent page. To solve them, either replace the link, publish the unpublished page, or use a 301 redirect to an alternative active page.

An **access denied** error occurs when Google is attempting to crawl a private page that doesn’t have a properly configured robots.txt file, or a page you want indexed that mistakenly has a robots.txt file.

**Finding and Fixing Duplicate Content**

Duplicate content is a major issue as far as search engines are concerned. Along with wanting to see quality, relevance and authority on your page, they also want each page to be original and unique. A major reason it’s important is because they want to know which page they should promote in search results.

The first way to prevent this is to ensure that all of your site pages contain unique content, including product descriptions, articles and your About Us page. Every page title, in fact every piece of content on your site has to be original.

In other cases, it’s a URL error, where Google is seeing the http, https, desktop and mobile versions of your pages as different URLs. The Google Search Console will allow you to find and consolidate duplicate content by setting your preferred URL, and using a canonical tag on those pages.

Once you’ve found and fixed a crawl error, mark all of them as solved in Google Search Console. This will let you know whether you’ve truly solved the issue, because if they’re not they’ll reappear in your Search Console the next time Google crawls your site.

**How to Test and Optimize Your Site Speed**

As you know, your site speed will determine whether your pages will even be crawled. It's also one of the biggest influences on the impression of professionalism on your site, and ultimately impacting sales.

Google provides a tool called PageSpeed Insights (PSI) to test and provide data about your site’s loading speed. It measures speed both on their own, as well as using loading speeds from your actual visitors. It’ll give you a performance score and also offer some suggestions for optimizing your site speed.

Testing and improving your page loading speed is a large and complex topic. Some basic and effective ways include using a content delivery network, using quality hosting, optimizing your Java and CCS files and plugins, and using web caching.

**Why the Google Map Pack is Important for Local Business**

The Maps Pack is essentially a way for local businesses to appear at the top of the search engine with very little effort. Especially when using a domain that Google provides for free to local businesses, it’s easy to rank when done right.

When someone searches for ‘restaurants in New York,’ there are too many local restaurants for one to hold that position. However, let’s say they search for ‘pizza restaurants in Lower Manhattan.’ Imagine the amount of traffic a restaurant could receive for free.

The Google Map Pack provides a large listing on the right-hand side of the search results. You can write your hours of operation, location information, a description of your business, pictures and many other elements. When multiple local businesses are listed, users can click ‘More places’ and scroll through a list of them. Whether you rank first for this listing or not, it’s certainly worth being involved.

The good news is that you can apply the same SEO principles in this guide to your local business listing. Begin by doing a search for the name of your local business and verifying it with Google to get a free domain.

**What are citations and why do I need them?**

Local SEO citations are references to your local business that are found in various locations across the web. They’re like votes of confidence and reputation for your local business listing, and Google will use them to determine how high to rank your listing. They’re also used to validate and verify that they’re indeed referring to your business, and not something with a similar name.

Great places to submit references include Facebook, articles and blog posts, press releases, forums and business directories (like online Yellow Pages). When submitting your citations, there are a few important rules to follow.

1. Use your exact business name, using identical spelling each time.
2. Use your full, exact business address.
3. Include all relevant and applicable information, including your business phone number and hours of operation.

**What are links and are all of them created equal?**

As you know, links are web addresses. When you click on them, they take you to some place on the internet. To Google and other search engines, quality links pointing to your site are also votes of confidence that they use to determine your search ranking.

Links are not all created equal. In fact, low-quality links are seen as spam and will be a detriment to your ranking. However, you can find these spammy links and remove them, so that they no longer have a negative impact on your site.

There are paid and free methods to find and remove bad links. In this guide, we’ll use free methods to find and remove them using the Search Console.

First, click Search Traffic and then Links to Your Site. Click the button that says “Download more sample links” to get a complete list of links in a CSV file. Any link from a site that isn’t related to your business, has a low domain score or has been deemed by Google to be spam can be disavowed using Google’s Disavow Tool.

**How can I use social media to gain customers for my business?**

In terms of SEO, social media is a great way to spread positive links to your website. One method is to publish articles on your website, then create unique blog posts from that content, which contain links to pages on your site that you want to rank for.

This is a simple yet effective strategy to gain customers from the search engines. However, it’s also possible to gain customers directly from social media. For example, a local restaurant can attract people in their local area and get them to call their phone number and book reservations.

For online businesses, you can create sales funnels in the content you share on social media. For example, someone sees a tweet or Facebook post which takes them to a blog post. They read the blog post and love the content, which happens to include a marketing message and a link to your online store. This is one valid way to generate sales for your products and services.

These examples of course are not comprehensive and don’t apply to all businesses. As you gain a following on social media, every post you publish will begin to get a lot more attention. Especially for local businesses, if these followers are based in your location, you can really start to generate leads to visit your store, with effective marketing messages.

**What are ads and how can I use them in my business?**

Ads are a guaranteed way to promote your business to people who fit your customer demographic. Pay per click (PPC) ads are available on Google, as well as social media sites like Facebook and Instagram.

Each time someone clicks on your ad, you pay a certain amount based on the keywords you’re using and the type of targeting and reach you’re looking for. For this reason, it’s extremely important that you both qualify who you promote your ads to and use effective sales psychology and ad management to increase your success with ads.

Believe it or not, there are ad management agencies that can produce and manage targeted ad campaigns for your business. These are experts who specialize in generating leads and sales for online and local businesses, on search engines and social media.

Over time, these ad campaigns can become more successful with a predictable ROI. However, it’s worth mentioning that companies and platforms that sell paid ads and promotion are designed to get you to spend as much money on ads as possible. For this reason, it’s also very important to work with an expert who knows how to get you consistent results.

Once you’ve gotten some customers via free traffic, it’s even easier to be successful with paid ads. This is because you can collect user data from people who visit your website and purchase from your business.

One of the main ways to achieve this is through Google Analytics. This powerful tool, and other tools like it, will show you crucial data, including where the traffic came from, where they live, what their interests are, how they interact with your site, and even which keywords they use to find your site. A PPC expert can use this information to create an optimize powerful ads using this information.

**Conclusion**

We’ve discussed the two major ways that businesses are getting real customers online: free and paid traffic. Most of these methods can be done for free, including on-site SEO and the Google Map Pack.

We’ve also talked about how ads can be used to predictably generate leads and sales for online and local businesses. Believe it or not, businesses like yours are using ad agencies with proven ROI to get customers for their business online.