10 COMMON SEO MYTHS BUSTED

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When it comes to SEO the only constant is change.

The methods that were once considered industry standards can now cripple a site, and Google’s seemingly constant algorithmic updates (Panda, Penguin and Hummingbird) have changed the way pages get indexed, how we as users perform searches and how SEOs influence rankings.

At Happy Dog Web Productions we really believe in the power of SEO. SEO doesn’t just help a website rank well in search results. It provides a better user experience. It helps a business define itself in the vast online world. It helps provide users with the information they are looking for. But, as SEO best practices continue to change a lot of misinformation still persists.

That’s where we come in. It’s time for us to break down some common SEO myths, and bust ‘em.
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No. 1: SEO is all about getting that top ranking

SEO goes way beyond search results. Top rankings definitely don’t guarantee success. You could rank No. 1 for all the big keywords in your industry, get boat loads of traffic, but not make any money from it.

According to Rebecca Churt, SEO Marketing Manager at Hubspot, while it’s true that users favor the top search results, studies show that being listed toward the top on subsequent pages have similar clickthrough behavior. Also, now that author tags and rich snippets (the text description underneath the web page title listed on the search results page) are displayed in results, those results that are listed below the top three on now getting better clickthrough rates.

Bottom line? You don’t need to rank No. 1 for every keyword to have a successful SEO campaign.

No. 2: Longer content is better

While some people believe that longer content is favored by search engines, the truth is that length doesn’t matter in a search engine’s eyes. According to Stephen Moramarco’s “6 SEO Myths Busted,” Google doesn’t count words on a page to determine ranking. Moramarco said:

“Sometimes a short article will still generate a lot of shares or comments, which does affect placement. The key is to make sure your SEO copywriting content is unique and compelling, and that’s the long and short of it.”

No. 3: Keywords need to be an exact match

Keywords do not need to be repeated exactly the same throughout a piece of content. You should be writing for your readers, not for search engines. It’s that simple.
No. 4: On-site SEO is all you need to rank

Your SEO efforts should encompass a variety of things including on-site SEO—not only on-site SEO. Flawless on-page SEO does not guarantee you’ll hit the top of the search results and the money will start rolling in. Good SEO also tackles user experience, off-page optimization and more.

No. 5: Guest blogging is where it’s at

Guest posting is a good technique to boost rankings, but it’s not the crowning SEO technique, nor will guest posting pull you directly to page one of Google without doing any other SEO work. Some SEOs are losing faith in guest blogging altogether.

Jayson Demers wrote on the CopyPress blog that some people seem to think SEO revolves around one or two trending techniques, and that guest blogging seems to be the current one.

SEO is a big-picture process. He reminds people not to forget all the other essentials in favor of focusing all your time on guest posts, because without a good user experience, great onsite content, clear title tags and meta descriptions “inbound links and publicity from guest posting won’t get you very far, from an SEO or a business perspective.”

No. 6: Your strategy should focus on link building

Everyone who seeks to receive healthy links should go about it carefully, especially after Google’s Panda and Penguin updates penalized low-quality links and black-listed many websites for their paid links. Link building is essentially dead, but link earning isn’t. Your strategy should include seeking out high-powered, quality links that “recommend” your site to Google and other users.

You could think of link earning as gathering professional references. You wouldn’t go around asking every single person you met for a recommendation—the drive-through person at Arby’s, strangers at the gas station, random people online—because that’d be ridiculous, right? You ask people you know, people who you have a relationship with you, know you, love you, and can speak to your strengths.

The same goes for link earning. If your links don’t mean something and come from a quality source, they’re pretty much worthless.

Bottom line? More links does not mean better rankings. Quality is definitely more important than quantity when you’re starting to get link juice coming to your site.
No. 7: I should be doing what the Fortune 500 companies are doing.

First off, there’s more than one way to do SEO. Many SEO companies have proprietary techniques that work for them that others may not even know about. SEO rewards creativity and smart thinking.

In addition, there’d no exact formula. Yes, there are certain practices that Google rewards and recognizes, but it’s less mathematical than you might think. In his article about SEO myths, Garry Przyklenk of Search Engine Watch warns against copying the big dogs simply because they’re big dogs.

“If you’re looking to the Fortune 500 for SEO tips or reverse engineering their “SEO campaigns,” stop now; [Fortune 500] doesn’t “get” SEO. Unfortunately, this fact... hit infamy when news hit about bad linking practices at JCPenney [in 2011].”

Basically, just because they’re big doesn’t mean they actually know what they’re doing.

No. 8: Your website doesn’t matter as long as there are keywords

Once upon a time, it was all about keywords—and to some degree, SEO is still very much about keywords. But in contrast to earlier times, when you could get away with “keyword stuffing” and when all site content seemed to be chock-full of keywords, now the SEO focus has shifted to prioritizing human users. This means that from an SEO perspective, you have to think of the person reading your page. Your onsite content has to flow well, provide value, and draw people in.

Let’s face it—fooling people into coming to your site just to provide poorly written on-site content is like sending invitations out saying you’re having the birthday bash of the century, but when people show up the balloons are popped, the cake is stale, and the house is filthy. Your traffic is going to high-tail it outta there—and that won’t help your reputation one bit.

If you don’t have the time to devote to creating quality site content, then look into hiring a web agency. Content is key. Content is king. And content is going to seal the deal for you when it comes to showing potential customers what you’re really all about.
No. 9: Good design doesn’t count for much

Great design doesn’t figure into algorithms, that much is true—but that doesn’t mean great design won’t be rewarded when it comes to SEO. Jayson Demers comments that most SEO experts aren’t necessarily interested in the aesthetic quality of a website—they are not web designers, in other words—and they tend to minimize the positive impact that quality web design can have on a site. But, he corrects that myth by saying:

“Google has a clear sense of design. In fact, a long while ago, it changed its algorithms to make sure it could recognize websites with content ‘above the fold’... or in simpler terms, easily accessible content.”

He adds that great design caters to the visitor, which achieves better conversions and builds brand trust, which drives traffic, which keeps the SEO circle flowing.

No. 10: Once you hit the top of the search results you’ll stay there

If all your SEO efforts have paid off and you’re sitting at the top of the search results right now, the worst thing you could do is stop what you’re doing. Just because you’ve reached the top doesn’t mean you are immune to falling back down.

A search engine’s engine is constantly changing. As we’ve mentioned a few times, Google’s algorithm updates are always stirring the SEO pot a bit. According to Moz, Google makes updates 500-600 times each year. Most of these are minor, but others are much bigger and can significantly impact rankings.

CONCLUSION

Despite all the misinformation out there, there is no denying that SEO is incredibly important to the success of a website, and a multi-faceted SEO plan is needed to reach that success.

Rebecca Churt says it perfectly in her “17 SEO Myths That You Should Leave Behind in 2014” guide:

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

Now, get to work!
Thanks for reading!

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