

1. Pre-Launch Preparations

- **Keyword Research:**
 - Identify primary and secondary keywords relevant to your business.
 - Use tools like Google Keyword Planner or Ahrefs to find high-volume, low-competition keywords.
- **Competitor Analysis:**
 - Research your top competitors' websites for keyword strategies and content ideas.
- **Create a Content Plan:**
 - Develop a content calendar focusing on producing high-quality, keyword-optimized pages.
 - Plan cornerstone content (key articles/pages that will be the foundation of your SEO strategy).

2. Technical SEO Setup

- **Domain Setup:**
 - Ensure the domain is accessible through a secure HTTPS connection.
 - Set your preferred domain (www vs. non-www) and use 301 redirects for consistency.
- **Website Architecture:**
 - Create a clear, logical website structure.
 - Ensure pages are no more than three clicks from the homepage.
 - Use breadcrumb navigation for better user experience and SEO.
- **Mobile-Friendliness:**
 - Check for mobile responsiveness using Google's Mobile-Friendly Test.
 - Ensure the site is optimized for both speed and user experience on mobile devices.
- **Site Speed Optimization:**
 - Compress images, minify CSS/JavaScript files, and leverage browser caching.
 - Use tools like Google PageSpeed Insights to test and improve load times.
- **XML Sitemap:**
 - Generate an XML sitemap and submit it to Google Search Console.
 - Include all indexable pages in your sitemap.
- **Robots.txt File:**

- Ensure the robots.txt file is properly set up to allow search engines to crawl your site.
- Block non-essential pages (e.g., admin, login pages).

3. On-Page SEO Essentials

Meta Tags:

- Write unique, keyword-optimized meta titles and descriptions for each page.
- Keep meta titles under 60 characters and descriptions under 160 characters.

Headings (H1, H2, H3):

- Use only one H1 tag per page and ensure it contains your primary keyword.
- Use H2 and H3 tags to break down content hierarchically and naturally include secondary keywords.

URL Structure:

- Keep URLs short, descriptive, and include target keywords.
- Avoid special characters or unnecessary numbers in URLs.

Internal Linking:

- Create a logical internal linking structure that supports user navigation and spreads link equity across the site.

Image Optimization:

- Add descriptive alt text to all images, using keywords where appropriate.
- Compress images for faster loading times.

Content Optimization:

- Ensure each page has high-quality, unique content that addresses the user's intent.
- Focus on delivering value, solving problems, and answering questions.
- Include your target keywords naturally within the first 100 words of content.

4. Analytics and Monitoring Setup

Google Search Console:

- Verify your site in Google Search Console to track indexing, crawling, and performance.

Google Analytics:

- Set up Google Analytics to monitor traffic, user behavior, and conversions.

Goal Tracking:

- Define and set up goals in Google Analytics (e.g., contact form submissions, product purchases).

Install SEO Plugins (for WordPress):

- Install and configure an SEO plugin like Yoast or Rank Math for ongoing optimization.

5. Post-Launch SEO Checks

- ❑ **Submit Sitemap:**
 - ❑ Submit your XML sitemap to Google Search Console and Bing Webmaster Tools.
- ❑ **Check for 404 Errors:**
 - ❑ Use tools like Screaming Frog to check for broken links or 404 pages and set up 301 redirects.
- ❑ **Canonical Tags:**
 - ❑ Ensure canonical tags are properly set up to avoid duplicate content issues.
- ❑ **Indexing and Crawlability:**
 - ❑ Monitor crawl reports in Google Search Console to ensure all pages are being indexed.
- ❑ **Structured Data (Schema Markup):**
 - ❑ Add schema markup for rich snippets (e.g., reviews, events, products) to improve visibility in search results.

6. Ongoing SEO Strategy

- ❑ **Content Updates:**
 - ❑ Regularly update and add new, high-quality content to your site to stay relevant in search results.
- ❑ **Backlink Building:**
 - ❑ Develop a strategy to earn high-quality backlinks from reputable sites to increase domain authority.
- ❑ **Monitor Performance:**
 - ❑ Use Google Analytics and Search Console to track keyword rankings, site performance, and user engagement over time.
 - ❑ Adjust your SEO strategy based on data insights.

7. Security and Maintenance

- ❑ **Regular Backups:**
 - ❑ Set up automated backups to prevent data loss.
- ❑ **SSL Certificate:**
 - ❑ Ensure your SSL certificate is active and renew it regularly to maintain HTTPS security.

See blog post for more information: <https://eliteseoconsulting.com/essential-seo-checklist-for-new-websites/>