



# SEO KEEPING ON TOP – THE CHANGING LANDSCAPE OF DIGITAL MARKETING

**KELVIN NEWMAN**, recently voted by his peers as the most influential SEO expert in the UK aged under 30, looks at the key issues for businesses in Search Engine Optimisation right now

Online marketing plans and strategies often change throughout the year, mainly because certain tactics aren't working but also because the digital landscape is constantly changing. New platforms and trends arise so it's key to stay on your toes. Nevertheless, if you've been through the arduous task of creating a digital marketing plan for 2013, you might want to consider these key aspects that your business should be addressing.

## Follow the Google+ herd

The importance of this tool is growing and your business needs to seize this. Make sure your business has a profile that is optimised. Include obvious items like your address, links to your site and other social profiles, images and videos. And don't forget to attract your viewers' attention with a striking cover image.

## Build a community

The days of LinkedIn businesses groups are dead, especially when you consider the introduction of Google's brand new 'communities'. Here, you can build your brand and improve awareness about your company as well as encouraging discussion between your fans.

## Hangout with your fans

Broadcast your brand to the world with Google hangouts. These handy resources, which are similar to webinars, are a fantastic way to bring your brand to life by engaging

face to face with your customers. They can allow you to share knowledge or insights about your products and allow your brand to get more personal with your customers.

## Personalise your content

With Google improving its algorithm, it now values authorship of content much higher than before in search engine ranking positions. By adding your Google+ profile to your content, you'll be rewarded personally for its quality. Therefore, if your site has a company blog with multiple authors you'll need to make sure you implement the rel='author' tag.

There are a few steps to get this set up; firstly you'll need a Google+ profile making sure that you have an image of yourself on there. Next step is to fill in the contributor section where you need to insert the URL of the site in which you regularly contribute (i.e. your blog). After that, take a trip to your blog and edit your profile settings which can be easily found within your dashboard (when using wordpress). Go to 'users' and insert your Google+ URL around your name like so:

```
<a href="GOOGLE PLUS PROFILE
```

```
URL?rel=author">Your Name</a>
```

This helps Google match up your posts with your Google Plus profile, allowing your author image to appear in the SERPS. Finally, check the procedure by copying one of your post URL's into the Google rich snippets tool.

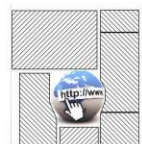
Now you should be all set up to profit from your blog showing in search engine rankings which will increase click-throughs to your site. Not only that, your search engine rankings will see a boost – the perfect way to start 2013.

## Get the most out of your blog

Blogs are such a great way to engage with your brand and entice people to your site. They are also brilliant for SEO purposes – Google loves fresh and regular content. Furthermore, natural SEO is becoming increasingly important and what better way to start gaining links naturally than from your own blog.

## Location location location

First things first, your blog has to be easily accessible. People visiting your site



need to know exactly where they can find your blog via the top menu bar – avoid using an image as it's not always clear that this is how you should get to your blog.

### **Make use of widgets and plug-ins**

Wordpress these days is so flexible, which makes creating an attractive and effective blog so easy. By including plug-ins like 'linkwithin' you'll keep visitors on your site for longer as well helping the spiders crawl your site better.

Another must have plug-in for your site is to have social buttons. 'addthis' does a very good job of being able to place social buttons on your posts and pages, thus enabling your fans to spread the word about your content. Social shares (especially +1's) hold a good weight within SEO and allow for your content to index quicker as well as rank higher. A surge of Twitter mentions and tweets can also help push your pages further up the rankings – so make sure you get social buttons in place if you want to get things moving fast.

### **Keyword research**

The wonderful thing about having a blog is that it helps your site rank in the search results for so many related keywords. If your blog has been set-up properly and has developed authority over time then by continually writing fresh content you'll increase your chances of ranking for related key terms.

Write content that your audience wants to read; answering common questions or issues can be a great way to start. Look back at what's worked in the past by analysing page views and visits on Google analytics and then tailor your content accordingly. If you have events coming up, be sure to build up the

event a few weeks before with content as well as on the main day.

### **Don't forget the simple things**

Images look great on your blog but they can also help your site rank. You can't just simply place an image on your site and just leave it there; alt txt plays a huge part in Google being able to understand what your image is about. Ideally you should either use the title of your post as the alt txt or simply use other related terms to what the article is about. This will enable your site to rank not just via search terms but via images as well. Quite often, targeting terms which have low amounts of images can result in your site gaining some of the top spots in image search.

### **Pinterest your business**

Pinterest has seen such a huge growth of users as well as helping certain brands increase their referral traffic from the visually rich content which gets published on the site. If you already have an account you should convert it to the business account with the following URL:

<http://business.pinterest.com/>

Once this has been done you need to select your business type as well as filling out a few descriptive details about your company. Next you should verify your website with Pinterest which enables you to become visible in search results. To do this, simply add a Meta tag from Pinterest to the header of your website.

You might want to consider adding the 'pin it

button' and the 'follow button' to your site to encourage your visitors to engage with your brand further. Social plugins for Wordpress sites support this widget which can therefore be implemented with ease.

### **Optimise**

Once your business profile set-up is complete you can then begin optimising your pins and boards to improve referral traffic. Include an alluring cover image as well as inserting any other links to other social profiles. The next step is to create boards relating to keywords which you'd like to rank for. This helps search engines associate your content better as well as enabling your consumers to easily access the content they're looking for.

Finally, consider running a competition or promotion via Pinterest, this will help build a solid fan base if you're just starting out on the platform. By using some or all of these points, you'll be well on your way to making huge improvements in your SEO campaigns. The importance of getting the most out of your Google+ pages cannot be underestimated.

There are so

many features and tools which Google is creating to help improve the visibility of your brand and it's so important for you to make most of them.

*Kelvin Newman is director of strategy with SiteVisibility*





