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HOW TO OPTIMIZE YOUR WEBSITE FOR SEARCH ENGINES

When someone uses a search engine like Google™, Bing™, or Yahoo™, the webpages considered to be the most relevant show up at the top of the search results — and the first few results typically get the most clicks. The trick is making sure you give search engines the right information so they'll display your website when potential clients are searching for a new insurance broker. This is called search engine optimization, or SEO.

So, how exactly do you improve your ranking on search engines to bring in more leads?

We're here to help with some SEO tips and tricks.



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DO YOUR KEYWORD RESEARCH

The first step in any search engine optimization strategy is keyword research, and it's extremely valuable when it comes to generating real leads through search engines. Here's how to get started:

- 1 Make a list of relevant keywords by thinking about how your target market talks.** Ask yourself (or better yet, ask some of your customers) these questions:
 - How do people refer to your company when talking about you to others? For example, do they say “insurance broker” or “insurance brokerage” or “insurance agent”? Pay attention to subtle nuances.
 - Which specific terms would someone use to find your business? Know that people are generally specific when they use search engines. If they're looking for “condo insurance in Toronto,” that's what they'll type in.
 - Why did your current customers choose you? Do you specialize in a particular kind of insurance or offer unique services (e.g., an app)? Be sure to highlight your areas of expertise and unique services.
- 2 Prioritize your keywords.** Once you have your list of potential keywords and phrases, ask yourself these questions to determine whether or not you want to include each one on your site:
 - Is the keyword really relevant to my website and my business?
 - If potential clients find my website through a search for this keyword, will they find the information they're looking for when they get there?
 - Will website traffic generated by this keyword help me achieve my overall marketing and business goals?
 - Will potential customers who find my site through this search term be profitable?
- 3 Work your keywords into the content on your site.** Once you've determined which keywords are most likely to help your website get in front of the right prospects, decide which pages you want people to land on when they enter those keywords into a search engine. Then, work to naturally incorporate your selected keywords into the relevant pages on your site.

Find out where your site stands

Before you go any further with SEO initiatives, you may be wondering where your site currently stands in search results. While it's not necessarily foolproof, here's a quick, easy, and free way to get a rough sense of your site's ranking on Google or other search engines:

- 1** Select the search terms you want to test from the list you created while doing your keyword research.
- 2** Open a new “incognito” or “private” window in your browser. (Note: the name for this may vary by browser.)
- 3** Type one of your keywords or phrases into the search bar.
- 4** Search through the results until you find your own website among the results.



NOTE: Broad keywords or phrases like “car insurance” or “home insurance” will have millions of results, with content from much larger brands competing for space in the first few pages. Try narrowing down your search a little more, like a customer would, by adding the name of your city (e.g., “car insurance in Ottawa”). It's worth noting that searching by location is most accurate if you're actually in that location when you enter your search.

OPTIMIZE YOUR SITE WITH HIGH-QUALITY CONTENT



The most important and effective thing you can do to improve your search engine ranking is to publish high-quality content that is truly valuable to your customers — and to make sure your keywords and phrases flow seamlessly into this content.

Good content:

- is interesting and engaging
- is written for people, not robots (keyword placement is natural, not forced)
- provides readers with the information they want, when they want it
- is likely to be shared or linked on social media channels or other websites
- prompts some kind of action (e.g., getting a quote, filling out a contact form, etc.)
- includes locally optimized key phrases when relevant

To help your content get farther on search engines, consider the following tips.

Write for people, not robots

Search engines can tell when the language on a page seems unnatural. If there are too many unrelated keywords on a page or if a single keyword appears too many times, this can negatively affect your placement in search results. Plus, consumers tend to disengage with forced or unnatural content, which creates a poor experience and encourages them to leave your site. Don't stuff your site with keywords — only include them where they fit in naturally.

Get the most out of your titles and headings

Page titles and subheadings are the first things search engines read when indexing your site — and they're the first things your visitors read. Your titles and subheadings should tell visitors what they can expect to find on the page so they know they're in the right place.

Whenever possible, try to include keywords in your page titles and subheadings — but don't overdo it, or you could hurt your position in search results. You should also break up your content by using H1, H2, and H3 heading tags to make it easier for search engines to categorize your content (and rank it accordingly).

Create unique content and avoid duplication

Using the same keywords on multiple pages on your site (or copying information from another webpage) might seem like a good idea, but it can actually hurt your search ranking. In fact, if a search engine determines that you've duplicated content to manipulate search results, it could negatively affect your results (and, in extreme cases, your site could even be removed from results entirely).

Make it local

When someone is looking for a local insurance broker, they might enter something like this into their search bar:

- "Waterloo home insurance"
- "best car insurance brokers near me"
- "how to buy insurance for my small business in Calgary"

If your brokerage serves a particular city or region, consider mentioning the location in your site copy or, at the very least, include a list of the cities and towns you serve (e.g., in your "about us" or "contact" page). Not only will this let potential customers know that you're located nearby, but it will help you reach people who have real potential to become your clients — instead of people who searched for "car insurance" or "home insurance," but live outside of the area you serve.



NOTE: If you serve a wider region, be careful that any local terms you use on your site don't limit your potential reach. For example, if your office is located in Ottawa but you serve the surrounding area as well, make that clear in your copy. If you want to create content specifically for one location, create a landing page or blog post that speaks directly to why this area is unique or deserves its own content. That way, you'll still reach that specific audience, but you won't be limiting the reach of the rest of your site.

KEEP YOUR SITE UP TO DATE WITH REGULAR BLOG POSTS OR NEWS ITEMS

The more often you update the content on your site, the more often search engines will come back to see what's new, triggering them to update their listings. Plus, if the content you publish provides true value to your prospective clients, they'll stay on your site longer, which tells search engines that your content is high quality — another way they decide where to position your website in their search results.

A good way to keep your site's content fresh is to plan on publishing a new blog post or news item at the same time every week or month. We know it's not always easy to find the time to create quality content, so we're here to help.

Our [blog at economical.com](https://www.economical.com) is written for customers, but designed for busy brokers like you. It's a go-to source for refreshingly clear insurance info and smart, simple ideas to help Canadians protect what matters most...and it's yours to share.

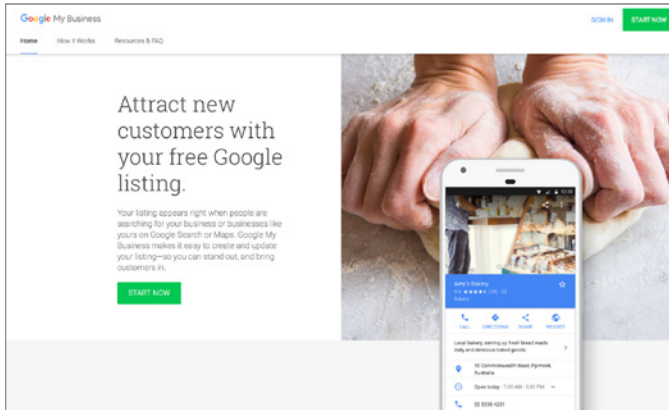


Download our [step-by-step guide to sharing our blog content on your own channels](#)

While all of the sharing methods listed in our guide will help provide value for your customers, your best bet for boosting your SEO is #2: adding your own commentary and linking to the post on our blog. Simply write a short introduction about the topic (don't forget a unique heading), and then link back to the original blog post on our site. See our how-to guide for full instructions.



CLAIM YOUR BUSINESS LISTING ON GOOGLE MY BUSINESS



[Google My Business](#) gives you the tools you need to update your business listing on Google to make sure people find accurate information when they search for your company. It also helps increase your chances of showing up in Google's local listings, Google Maps, and organic search results. You can update your business hours, add photos, respond to reviews, and more. Plus, it gives you valuable insights so you can see how people are finding your business, where they're coming from, and how they interact with your business listing on Google.

You'll need to claim your business listing and verify that you're the owner before you can start editing the information in the listing. Once you've signed up for a Google My Business account, verifying your business usually means requesting a postcard from Google and entering the verification code from the postcard into your account. Some businesses may be able to verify their business through other methods, like phone call, text, or email.



To learn more about verifying your business and claiming your listing on Google My Business, [check out this helpful article from Google.](#)

Keeping your Google My Business listing up to date is a great way to start taking control of your company's online presence.





GET REAL REVIEWS

Word-of-mouth advertising is one of the most powerful tools when it comes to generating new leads — and in today's digital landscape, many people consider online reviews just as trustworthy as recommendations from friends. Reviews can also show up in search results, so they're a good way to boost your local SEO, too. Here are a few ways to get the most out of your online reviews.

Create profiles for your business on popular review sites

Before you can start managing reviews of your business online, it's important to set up or claim your business pages on review sites like Google, Facebook™, Yellow Pages™, and Yelp™. This will allow you to take ownership of your business profiles on these platforms so you can edit details like your contact information and hours of operation, as well as manage and respond to your reviews.

Don't be afraid to ask for reviews

Unfortunately, a satisfied customer won't usually be the first to go online and speak their mind — a customer is a lot more likely to leave a review when they've had a negative experience. While it can be discouraging to receive negative reviews, it doesn't mean your business is unworthy of positive ones — but sometimes happy customers need more of a push to put their feelings online.

If you have a particularly positive experience with a customer and feel like you have a good connection, don't be afraid to ask if they can leave you a quick and honest review online. Generally speaking, a truly satisfied customer will be happy to help you spread the word. That said, it's not a good idea to offer incentives for positive reviews or solicit fake reviews; just ask real customers to provide genuine feedback.

Respond to reviews and show off your customer service skills

The way you respond to reviews (whether they're good or bad) can say a lot about your customer service skills, so write a thoughtful response for every review. For positive reviews, simply thanking the reviewer for their feedback is usually enough. Responding to negative reviews may take a little more thought, but it also gives you the opportunity to publicly address negative feedback and do your best to rectify the situation. This gives potential customers important insight into how you handle unhappy clients and shows them how much you care about customer service.

Not only do online reviews help potential customers get the information they need to choose the right insurance broker, but they also help search engines recognize your business and allow them to include reviews in their search results.

CHECK THESE SEO-BOOSTING TO-DOS OFF YOUR LIST, TOO

While doing your keyword research, keeping your site up to date with high-quality content, updating your business listings, and getting real reviews can all help boost your SEO, there are many more things you can do to take your efforts that much farther.

Check these off your list, too:

- Make sure your website is optimized for mobile devices
- Optimize your images using a site like [Optimizilla](#) so your site loads faster
- Use keywords in your image file names, alt tags, and captions
- Make sure every page on your site has a unique meta description (and include relevant keywords in each description, too)
- Include links to well-respected authority websites like your local or provincial government or the [Insurance Bureau of Canada](#) in your content
- Diversify your content by including videos, images, and other visual elements
- Check for broken links on your site using a tool like [Screaming Frog](#)
- Include a “contact us” page on your site’s main navigation menu





MEASURE THE RESULTS

Search engine optimization is as much an art as it is a science, and most search engines won't tell you how they decide which content to feature in their results. The best practices in this guide have been found to help boost SEO, but it may take some trial and error to figure out which strategy has the most impact on your own site.

After you've taken some steps to improve your SEO, give search engines a little time to refresh their listings, and then use a tool like Google Analytics to monitor your website's performance for things like:

- How much traffic your site gets from search engines
- Which of your site's pages users are landing on first
- Which of your site's pages people are interacting with most
- If your keyword rankings have gone up or down

Going through your website's analytics and data can be a fairly advanced task if you've never used a tool like Google Analytics before, but it's important to make sure all of your SEO efforts are working. Don't be afraid to look for help on the internet (on the [Google Analytics support site](#), for example) or get support from a qualified professional if you need it.