

# Improving Website's Content for Lead Generation and Customer Engagement

Company X

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ABSTRACT

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Nowadays, B2B buyers prefer to spend two thirds of buying journey on web searching for technological suppliers and products before purchasing. The change in B2B buyer searching behaviors requires new marketing approaches. Thus, search engine optimization is one of the most popular digital marketing tools, which improves a website's performance so that it can appear at the top of organic search results and can easily be found by target buyers. The purpose of the thesis is to use SEO to develop a website's content for more lead attractions and better customer care.

The author studied the B2B buying process to understand about B2B buyers' concerns in making purchase decisions. The theory of SEO marketing implies how to apply SEO into a B2B website's content development plan. The empirical research and the development plan are confidential and only available for the case company.

The website is the main marketing channel for the case company for lead generation and customer engagement. In B2B environment, the satisfied customer is the key referrals to earn more leads. The website should be continually upgraded to an interesting information hub for leads and customers.

Key words: search engine optimization, B2B website development, B2B buying journey

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## 1 INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 Research background

Nowadays, the Internet is indispensable in the human life. The Internet growth and technological developments have changed drastically the way to do information search, communication and trading. In 2009, the number of Google searches was less than 800 billion, which grew to over 2.25 trillion in 2014. (Jefferson& Tanton 2015.) Together with the change of online searchers' behaviors, it appeared as the new marketing strategy or the so-called digital marketing: the marketers send nurturing messages about products to the target customers via online media distribution channels. For example, the channels are emails, websites, blogs, videos and etc. (Strauss& Frost 2016, 19-20.) Thanks to a variety of media distribution channels, the marketers and the business are more flexible to reach to their ideal customers. The digital marketing is expected the future marketing strategy due to its customer centric characteristic. (Miller 2012, 5-6.)

According to the Marketing Sherpa survey (2012), 71% of B2B purchases were initiated with a web search. The research was done to improve the website's content for the case company via search engine optimization (SEO) to generate more leads and serve current customers better.

### 1.2 Research Objectives, Questions and Limitations

The thesis aims to use SEO to improve the website's content for lead generation and customer engagement in the case company. In order to obtain the website's improvements, the researcher needs to be command of the SEO practices and apply them into the practical research.

It is important to clarify a research question during the research planning. The research question helps the author focus on what the research problem is and looking for the answers. (Myers 2013, 20-21.) The clear

research question will direct the author and audiences to the relevant and useful answers (Van Thiel 2014). The research question in the thesis:

- How to apply SEO practices in improving website's content to generate leads and engage with customers?

The research's validity depends on the boundary of the research, so it is critical to point out the limitations of the research. The research concentrates on developing the website's content by SEO practices. Besides, the research also spotlights the development plan for the website in order to gain more B2B leads and customer. Briefly, the results in the thesis are for the case company to rise their leads and enhance the customer loyalty on website by applying SEO practices.

### 1.3 Thesis structure

The author demonstrates the thesis structure in this chapter. There are 4 main parts in the thesis: Introduction, Theoretical framework, Empirical research and Conclusion.

The theoretical framework include 2 chapters, which are the buyer's making decision journey and SEO in B2B environment.

The chapter B2B buying process presents about differences between B2B and B2C buyers, how a B2B customer makes purchase decisions and how the website's content can assist them in buying process.

The chapter SEO provides the understanding of search engines' mechanism, and how the website's content affect to the website's ranking in the search results listing.

Then, the empirical part consists of a research design and a website development plan, which is confidential and belongs to the case company. Thus, the details in the part will not be shown publicly.

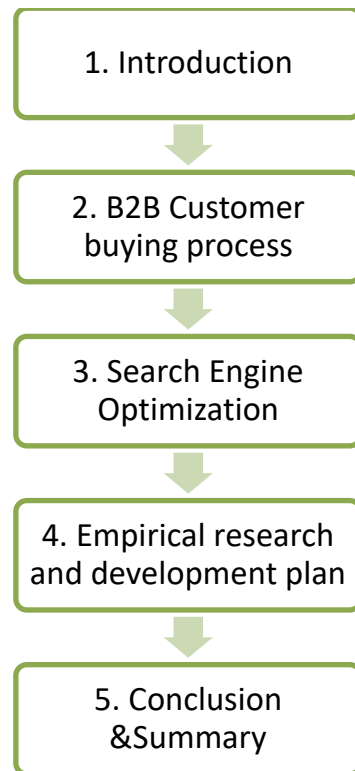


FIGURE 1. The thesis structure

Briefly, the audiences were introduced about the research's background information and the thesis structure. In the next chapter, it begins the theoretical framework with B2B customer buying process.

## 2 B2B CUSTOMER BUYING PROCESS

The chapter presents about the purchase journey in B2B environment. The objective is to giving the understanding of differences between B2B and B2C buyers, the buyer's concerns during the purchase journey and how the supplier's information can support the buyers in the buying process.

It is essential for the B2B online marketers to consider the changing customer behaviors over the purchase process. Addressing their issues during purchase making-decision is able to provide helpful information for their target customers, supports marketers to understand their customer deeper. (Charlesworth 2009, 157.) Without understanding the customer behaviour, the marketers are impossible to conduct the effective marketing plans (Dibb & Simkin 2004, 30).

### 2.1 B2B buyer vs Consumer buyer

In accordance with Miller (2004, 23), due to the significant differences between B2C and B2B buyers, it is not able to apply the same digital marketing practices in B2C for the B2B environment. Thus, in this part, the comparison of B2C and B2B buyers helps the audience clearly differentiate the consumer and the industrial target customers and understand the right marketing approach for each environment.

In terms of the target customer, the consumer online marketing approaches the end-user consumer, which means the buyer is the user. The industrial digital marketing's customers are organizations, specifically the buying centre which is the group of influencers inside the customer company towards making industrial purchase decision. In another word, the target customer of industrial digital marketing are people involved in purchasing, but perhaps are not end-users. (Dibb & Simkin 2004, 28- 38.)

The length of sales process in B2C is shorter than that in B2B. To decide for acquiring any product in one company, it requires more acceptances from the buying centre than a single buying decision from one individual.

(Miller 2004, 26.) Indeed, the people in the buying centre take a critical responsibility for the organization's success. If the provider they select performs well, they help the company grow. Otherwise, the launch of inappropriate product in one organization costs only the investment of time, money and labor but also the credibility of the buying centre. (Leake, Vaccarello & Ginty, 2012, 5.) Thus, the purchase decision-making process in B2B is more complicated and it increases the length of sales process in B2B (Dibb & Simkin 2004, 36). The table 1 introduces the steps in each buying journey of B2B and B2C customers.

TABLE 1. The buying processes of B2B and B2C customers (Dibb & Simkin 2004, 28- 38)

Steps	B2B buying decision process	B2C buying decision process
1	Problem recognition	Problem recognition
2	Building up the requirements for the product to problem solving	Searching for product information
3	Browse for products and providers	Evaluate the alternative product choices
4	Compare products and providers according to requirements	Buy
5	Choose and purchase the most fitting products and providers	Evaluation after buying
6	Evaluate the performance of product and provider	

There are more issues in the B2B buying process because of the high risks of choosing poor suppliers and products (Dibb & Simkin 2004, 36). Therefore, the marketing messages to B2B customers should be about



problem-solving, based on facts and professional knowledge which provides the reliable information for building up the sustainable customer relationship. Meanwhile, the B2C marketing messages are more typically emotional, such as a low price and discount offer. (Miller 2012, 26.)

Besides, the distribution of B2C marketing messages is more extensive than that of B2B. B2C organizations focus on the mass marketing direction, at the meantime, B2B marketing direction is more targeted. Specifically, the B2C websites usually tend to be designed with beautiful product images, impressive flash animations, provides with special discount offers, free shipping and other engagements. In contrast, B2B sites are more informational, bring more lots of links to additional texts and downloads. (Miller 2012, 27-28.)

In conclusion, B2B and B2C buyers are totally different in terms of buying behaviors, and it is impossible to replace B2B marketing practices by B2C ones. More specifically, the issues of organizational purchase making-decision process requires different marketing solutions from that of individual one. Thus, targeting customers, supplying the problem-solving, and building up personal relationships with the buying centre are determinants of the B2B digital marketing success.

## 2.2 B2B buying journey

In B2B environment, the buying decision is made by a group of people in one company. The group is called buying centre or the making-decision unit. (Miller 2004, 26; Charlesworth 2009, 157.) There are different ways to classify members' roles in the making-decision committee. The table 2 shows the collection of various role classifications in the buying centre.

TABLE 2. A variety of role divisions in the making-decision unit  
(Charlesworth 2009, 157; Leak et al 2012, 29-34)

Webster & Wind (1972 cited in Charlesworth 2009, 157)	Leak et al (2012, 29-34)	Enquiro (2007b cited in Charlesworth 2009, 157)
Initiators: recognize the problems in an organization and propose to find the solution from vendors.	The check signers: guarantee the required specifications of the product to be in line with the budget.	The economic buyer: considers about the budget for purchases and keep the power of giving the buying decision.
Users: directly use the services or products from the vendors and give feedbacks on the vendors' quality.	The influencers: do not give a final buying decision but have strong effect on the buying decisions.	The user buyer: influences strongly on the purchase decision.
Influencers: influences critically on the buyers while making purchase-decisions.	The change agent: takes charge for evaluating product choices	The technical buyer: involves judging the product specifications, even logistics and delivery fare.
Deciders: select the vendor alternatives according to recommendations of influencers	The executive sponsor: makes the ultimate purchases decision.	

<p>Approvers: evaluate the alternatives and decide that the alternative is the best choice.</p>		
<p>Buyers: finally decide to engage with a vendor or not.</p>		
<p>Gate-keepers: assists the buyers in the final purchase decisions. For example: a personal assistant</p>		

Indeed, the buying centre are responsible for the organization's success due to their significant purchase decision. The implementation of wrong product can cost the damages to the company and the job of each member in the decision making unit. (Leake, Vaccarello & Ginty, 2012, 5.) Thus, the purchase decision-making process in B2B is more complex and it increases the length of sales process in B2B (Dibb & Simkin 2004, 36).

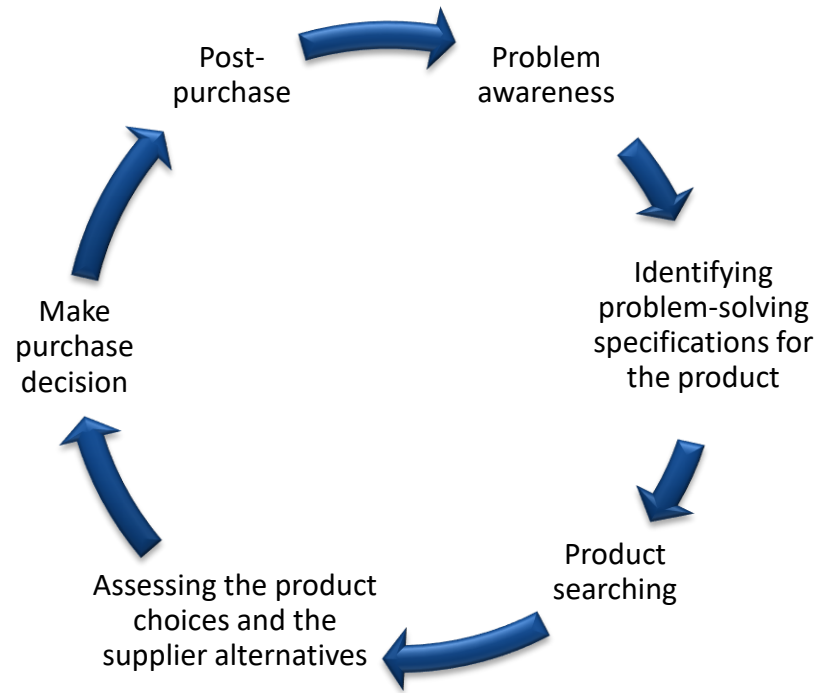


FIGURE 2. The general B2B buying process (Charlesworth 2009, 159)

It is significant for a business to navigate different buyers in the B2B buying process. Assessing the B2B target buying practices can assist the online marketer to identify who is the economic buyer to make the purchase decisions, what information the technical buyer needs and how the user buyer can experience the product usage. (Charlesworth 2009, 158.)

### 2.3 B2B lead generation

More and more customers prefer independent searching before contacting the suppliers. The pre-purchase research even goes up to 70% of the buyer's journey before the buyers engage with vendors. (Cebglobal, 2018.) Most B2B decision-makers do online researches for a technological vendor and they usually end up searching in Google (Brito, 2017).

According to Charlesworth (2009, 160), there are following ways which the website's content can approach its B2B target customers in the buying process:

- Problem awareness: the website publishes the helpful content for the B2B buyer to recognize their problems
- Identifying problem-solving specifications for the product: The topics on the website should be more specific about problem-solving and along with the product descriptions.
- Searching for the product information: 85% B2B buyers do web-search for their buying decisions. Search Engine Optimization and the valuable content will help buyers easily find their necessary information.
- Assessing the choices of products and suppliers: according to the impression of the company via its website, the buyers will consider whether to do contact with the company. Building the business image on the website is very critical for lead generation.
- Making purchases: in some industries, the buyers tend to make online purchases and orders. Meanwhile, the buyers in other industries prefer to purchase and order offline. Depending on the target buyer in a particular industry, the website needs developed to meet the buyer needs in B2B transaction.
- Post-purchases: Frequently-Asked-Questions is a common element of the website to serve their customers after sales. Furthermore, the Frequently-Asked-Questions should be customer-centric and practical knowledge; for instance, how to install the software and how to update the latest product version.

According to the B2B buying process, the lead generation can begin in the steps Problem awareness, Mapping product specifications and Product searching. Besides, the website should be developed in a way to start a sustainable relationship more than to increase the sales number.

(Jefferson and Tanton 2015, 216.)

In summary, the B2B purchase decisions are always involved by a buying centre or a decision-making unit in one company. The B2B buyers do online research for vendors, which occupies over two-third the purchase path. Therefore, it is vital for online marketers to clarify the different decision-makers and support them during their pre-purchase research. Finding leads on the Internet and helping them decide to engage are the main purpose of B2B websites. (Charlesworth 2009, 163.) Thus, the next chapter will introduce the online marketing tool- Search Engine Optimization for helping the website more easily found by the target leads.

### 3 SEARCH ENGINE OPTIMIZATION

The chapter aims to present the concept of Search Engine Optimization and how to optimize the website to be easily-found and user-friendly for target customers.

In 2014, according to the research by Acquity Group (2018), 94% of B2B buyers do online search before making purchases. Therefore, the technological suppliers aim to improve their websites to be found most by their target buyers and search engine optimization is one of the effective marketing tools for this purpose.

Search Engine Optimization is a set of actions to develop the webpages and increase the link popularity so as to obtain the top position on the search results pages of popular search engines (Gay, Charlesworth & Esen, 2007, 219).

In line with Leake, Vaccarello & Ginty (2012, 38), Search Engine Optimization refers to the algorithmic system supporting search engines in ranking the most relevant and prevailing content associated with a search query. However, the challenge to SEO of the website is a management of integral parts: word choices, code, data, design and competition so as to be ranked in the top of a random research result page.

On the other hand, Search Engine Optimization means the process of revising a website in terms of on-page and off-page performances so that it will be listed and positioned at the top by search engines. In brief, SEO is to make a website to be the most friendly to search engines' algorithms. (Dodson, 2016, 7.)

For effective SEO, it requires to understand how search engines work and how to make the website be the most compatible with their searching mechanism (Dodson 2016, 7). The next parts will reveal more facts about search engines' mechanism and steps in a SEO plan.

### 3.1 Search Engines

Search engines provides a service leading users to a website. The high traffic site helps the browsing sites to sell advertising. Thus, the search engines focus on satisfying their users' needs in searching information. More exactly, reliable and suitable search results will gain more users in the search engine. (Charlesworth 2009, 177.)

Nowadays, the search engines have expanded their service tools to manage, research and report data. For example, Google has Google Analytics, Google Search Console and etc. (Chris 2018). According to netmarketshare (2018), about the search engine market share by desktops and mobile devices, the list comes as: Google takes up 81.66%; Baidu covers 7.69%; Bing and Yahoo shares 5.59% and 3.83%, respectively.

After typing keywords in the search field, the search engine will return the website results which are ranked from the most relevant to the least. However, it does not mean that the search engines starts searching and filtering results once the search phrases are issued. Before receiving any query, search engines have prepared the website results in their database. The preparation process is how a search engine actually works and it works continuously to update new sites and its database. Interestingly, for the same keywords, different search engines give different search results. (Gay, Charlesworth & Esen 2007, 212.)

When the crawler or the spider visits one website, it goes through the content, collects the keywords within the content and stores the webpage's address in the database. According to the database of the search engine, when an Internet user looks for a search phrase, the search engine can retrieve the webpages which have the relevant content to search query. However, the spider does not see the website as the way the audiences do. Literally, the search engine reads the source code of the webpage, which is the underlying content but the display content. (Borgers 2009, 155.)



The figure 3 shows how a search engine finds websites.

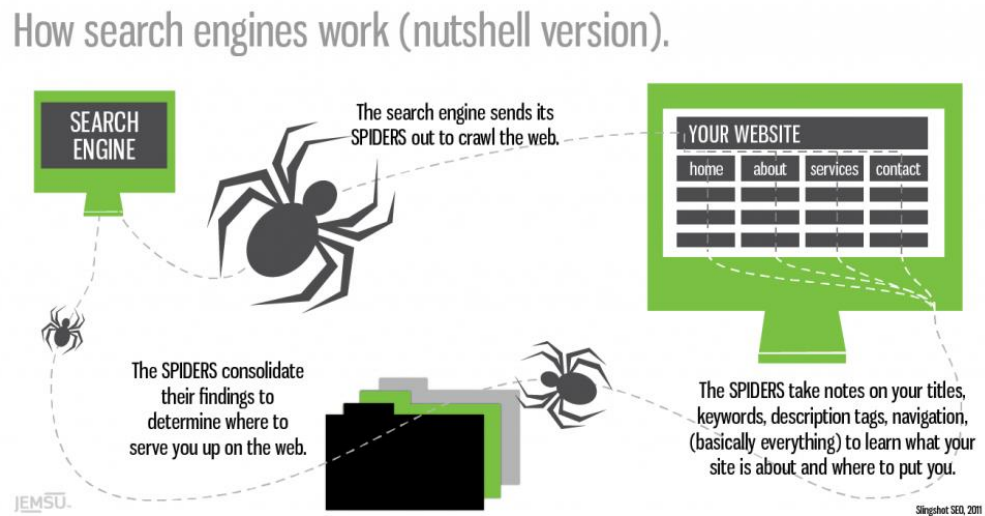


FIGURE 3. The working process of search engine (Chris 2018)

The process of a search engine includes crawling and indexing. Crawling's purposes is to identify and update information about one website such as a host server, a number of pages, a website's type content (text, images or videos). The information of webpages are codes, only read by the search engine algorithms. (Gay, Charlesworth & Esen 2007, 217.)

Next, in the Indexing step, the collected information about the website is organized, sorted and stored at the retrievable storage. The search engine result pages (SERP) will display the results of webpages which are retrieved from the search engine's database and associated to the search query. The position of each result on SERP depends on its ranking evaluated by the search engine algorithms. (Chris 2018.)

Search engines are the complex computing programs, or simply robots that sends mathematical crawlers (or bots, or spiders) over the Internet to read the website (Borgers 2016; Chris 2018). The search engine algorithms always changes over the time due to the technological advances. Therefore, on the same search engine, it returns different search results on different searching times. (Gay, Charlesworth & Esen 2007, 217.) According to the understanding about search engines'

operations, Dodson (2016) introduced the SEO process for improving one's site search result ranking.

According to Dodson (2016), the SEO four-stage process is a continuous process, ensuring the non-stop improvements for website's performance to attract visitors and engage customers. The process illustration is in figure 4. More details in each step will be shown in next sub-chapters.



FIGURE 4. The SEO process (Dodson 2016, 8)

### 3.2 Goal

It is vital to define the realistic goals for SEO plans because the goals orient the development of SEO plans. Without awareness of SEO benefits before implementing these tactics, it causes the waste of many integrated sources in an organization such as time, human and finance. (Dodson 2016, 8.)

After defining the SEO objectives, it is necessary to identify the right metrics to measure the goals (Dodson 2016, 15). Measurement is totally nonsense and harmful for a business if KPIs are chosen carelessly (Leake, Vaccarello & Ginty, 2012, 40). Here are some examples of common objectives and metrics.



FIGURE 5. Common SEO objectives and SEO metrics (Dodson 2016, 15)

Search Engine Optimization is the process to make the website appear on the first SERP. Besides, there are still other benefits that one company can set them as their SEO goals. After setting the SEO goals, the organization needs consider the main aspects of a website: On-page and Off-page. (Dodson 2016, 15.)

### 3.3 On-Page Optimization

In accordance with Charlesworth (2009), On-site Optimization relies on the two main factors: a website itself and the outside parameters. The parameters outside of a webpage are external sites linking to the page that performs as earned pages.

Besides, in a simple way, On-site Optimization includes the practices of refining the website structure, keywords and content for higher rankings (Dodson 2016, 20; Searchmetrics 2018). The objective and steps in each refining practice are shown.

### 3.3.1 Keywords

Keywords are search phrases that users typing into the search box. They functions as a query to a database of search engine. Based on the input keywords, the algorithm can retrieve numerous pages containing such keywords. (Gay, Charlesworth & Esen 2007, 216.)

Thus, the choices of search phrases and where to put in a webpage for being indexed higher are necessary. In order to select the right search phrases, it depends on the customer's purposes and the customer search behaviors. The keywords are displayed in a website's content and in a website's source code. The content is what the audiences see and the source code is what the search engines read. (Charlesworth 2009, 192.)

The pain points of target customers are the sources of topics and keywords that the businesses can address (Jefferson & Tanton 2015, 106). However, the target customers do not use exactly the same search phrases which the business expect (Leake, Vaccarello & Ginty 2012, 42-43; Jefferson & Tanton 2015, 106). In fact, paid search terms only cover 20% to 40% of keywords. The most common keywords length is approximately two or three words, because most of searchers tend to type as few words as possible. (Leake, Vaccarello & Ginty 2012, 41.)

There is a plenty tactics of finding right keywords for a particular business section. Search phrases are the connecting point for businesses and customers (Leake, Vaccarello & Ginty 2012, 42.) The search engines also supply the analysis tools to support SEO for companies such as Google Trends, AdWords Keyword Planner (Jefferson & Tanton 2015, 106). Besides, the organizations provides the SEO services to detect the keywords in a particular business field. For example, SpyFu, SEOmoz, OpenSite Explorer. (Leake, Vaccarello & Ginty 2012, 42.)

The keyword placement also has an important effect on SEO (Charlesworth 2009, 192). People usually forget to mention the search phrases in the code tags for images, PDF titles and filenames, videos and URL addresses (Leake, Vaccarello & Ginty 2012, 46). However, the

algorithms of search engines nowadays become more sophisticated so that the keywords stuffing possibly downgrades the ranking of a site when it receives negative feeds from audiences (Charlesworth 2009, 192; Leake, Vaccarello & Ginty 2012, 44; Dodson 2016, 19-20).

In brief, the keyword and the content topic are vital principles for a webpage's search engine optimization. The search phrases are the most concise description of the content. Keywords can be exploited if they are put into the tags in a website's structure (Leake, Vaccarello & Ginty 2012, 42.)

### 3.3.2 Content

Content is the core of SEO because of its dual impacts on target customers and the results listings (Borgers 2009, 158). According to Leak, Vaccarello and Ginty (2012, 44), the purpose of content creation is initially for customer attraction, but for the search engine algorithms.

Articles, white papers, videos and infographics are commonly shared content on websites and social media. Every marketer becomes a publisher to deliver their target audience the educational and engaging content on sites, so as to retain the company's credibility and secure the ranking on SERP. (Dodson 2014, 38.)

Content marketing, according to Strauss & Frost (2016, 35), is a master plan of producing and sharing content to the target audiences with a view to increase their awareness, engage them in a win-win relationship. Next, the author introduces the 4P model to produce the marketing content.



FIGURE 6. Pam Didner's content marketing model (Didner 2014 cited in Toni 2016)

About the model 4P from Didner (2014), the four stages are as follows:

- Plan: this step prepares the necessary information for creating content later. The information is possibly about organizational objectives, customer segmentation and the content marketing team.
- Produce: the content production is creating the relevant, up-to-date content over the understanding of customers and online environment.
- Promote: the step involves in how and where to distribute content in the Internet.
- Perfect: the step is to evaluate the effectiveness of content production and content distribution, so that the marketers can fix their impairments in the strategy to reach the objectives set in the Plan step.

Briefly, the valuable content should be not only customer-centric but also search engine friendly (Jefferson & Tanton 2015, 103). As mentioned, the algorithms work on the signal feeds from the web visitors. The content of a site includes text, images, pdf files, videos and it is vital to keep them prevailing and valuable to target audiences. (Dodson 2016, 22.)

### 3.3.3 The source code

The display content on every site is written by a coding language, called Hypertext Markup Language or HTML. HTML only regulates text structure, meanwhile another coding language rules visual content. There are several versions of HTML and HTML5 is the latest version at the moment. (ComputerHope 2017)



FIGURE 7. The HTML5 source code and its result on a site (Reiffman 2016)

The source code is the skeleton of the website, and the search engine works as an X-ray machine to see and understand one site's source code (Borger 2009, 155). Thanks to that, there are helpful tags for SEO: Heading tags, Alt tag and Meta tags

Heading tags are to design the site structure and to assist the audience and the search engines reading the site content. The heading tags range from H1 to H6, in which H1 tag is read by the search engines and provides the topic idea of the page. (Dodson 2016, 24.) Thus, H1 tag is very important for SEO and it is wise to include keywords here. The heading tags not only facilitate the audience's reading but also improve the search engines to classify the page's content. (Charlesworth 2009, 194.)

Alt tag is used for images' descriptions. Most of image captions are neglected; meanwhile, the caption is the good place to put keywords. Using alt tag enhances the search engine to organize a site into the

relevant search results for the similar keywords. (Charlesworth 2009, 194; Leake, Vaccarello & Ginty 2012, 46; Dodson 2016, 26.)

Meta tags are in HTML source code of a website, aim to describe a page's content for search engines to index. In another word, Meta tags are HTML codes which do not affect to the display of a webpage but increase the user experience more positive. (Dodson 2016, 23.) See the example of Meta tags in the figure 8.

```
<meta http-equiv="Content-Type" content="text/html; charset=utf-8" />
  <title>Meta Tags - How Google Meta Tags Impact SEO & PPC | WordStream</title>
  <meta http-equiv="Content-Type" content="text/html; charset=utf-8" />
<meta name="copyright" content="WordStream is a registered trademark of WordStream, Inc. C
<meta name="description" content="Meta tags can have a larger impact on SEO and your websi
<meta name="keywords" content="meta tags,meta tag,meta tags seo,meta tags definition,what
<meta name="robots" content="index,follow" />
<meta name="DC.title" content="How a Meta Tag Impacts SEO & PPC" />
```

FIGURE 8. The Meta tags in one HTML source code (Wordstream, 2018)

Among a plenty of Meta tags, there are two attentive tags which supports SEO of a website (Wordstream 2018):

- Title tag is the first line on the search result in the listing. It introduces the topic page directly to the searchers (Chris 2018).
- Description tag shows the brief information about the website under its link result on the search engine result page (Dodson 2016, 23).

### The Complete WordPress SEO Guide - Reliablysoft.net

<https://www.reliablysoft.net/ebook/wordpress-seo-guide/> ▼

The only **guide** you will ever need to **SEO** Wordpress. Learn Step-by-Step how to increase your traffic and find out how to practically build a successful website ...

FIGURE 9. An example of Title tag- the pink text and Description tag- the grey text on one search result (Chris 2018)

Even though only the title tag is able to make the indexing rank higher, the title and description tags both provide the audience a summary of the website and attract them to visit. Meta tags enhance the SEO of one webpage critically if they are used properly. (Dodson 2016, 23.)

In brief, On-Page Optimization refers to the tools which secure the website elements be read easily and indexed correctly by the search engines. The



website elements are keywords, content and website design. (Dodson 2016, 8.) Specifically, the audience for B2B websites is not an individual but a group of people who involves in purchase decisions of a company. Due to that, the B2B websites also have to secure their authority by giving the valuable content to their B2B audiences. (Leak et al 2012, 30.)

### 3.4 Off-Page Optimization

Off-line Optimization focuses on the amount of links and quality of links returning to the website in order to get the higher ranking. (Dodson 2016, 42.) During the lifetime of a website, there are more than two pages in the website and a variety of earned pages recorded in the databases of search engines by keywords and links. The link popularity is one of significant factors contributing to ranking (Gay, Charlesworth & Esen 2007, 216.)

#### 3.4.1 Internal links

Internal links are the connections between the pages within a website. The links account for 70% of one site's search engine ranking. When the website is rich in content, it has a plenty of pages to attract visitors. However, the number of internal links only can secure the ranking if the links attract naturally. (Dodson 2016, 35.)

The natural attraction of links is relevancy and prevalence of topics and keywords within links. The search engines will penalize one website having irrelevant pages by putting it out of their indexes. Inter-linking between webpages needs to be considered in terms of content quality and the homepage theme. (Gay, Charlesworth & Esen 2007, 215.)

In line with Dodson (2016, 35), a link comprises a link text and a link address. The link text describes the text on the page and the link address or URL is the place that the link text takes visitors to. Based on those, there are useful link formats for boosting SEO in a website:

- Uninformative link needs an anchor text direct the audiences to follow next pages and do the call-to-action.
- Topic link has the topic within the text link.
- Keywords link contains keywords.

### 3.4.2 Inbound links

An inbound link is a link from other websites which directs the visitors to a site (Charlesworth 2009, 199; Leak et al 2012, 48). Having more inbound links means having more validity in the site in terms of SEO. However, not all links referring to the website will make it indexed higher by search engines. (Charlesworth 2009, 195.)

As mentioned before, the search engines evaluate the website's authority according to the quality and the relevance of inbound links to the website. Developing a number of websites and linking them together without quality and associated keywords will cause one website to be out of search engines' indexes. (Gay et al 2007, 215.)

In order to get more reciprocal links, the company are recommended to link-building on its own more than buying links (Leak et al 2012, 51). The tactics for link-building will be shown more in the next part.

### 3.4.3 Link development

The main factor in off-page optimization is links and developing links properly is the most vital thing for better website's ranking (Leak et al 2012, 51). In developing link popularity of a website, it needs build valid links and renew irrelevant links (Dodson 2016, 36-37).

Building links	Refreshing links
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Local links</li> <li>• Authoritative sites</li> <li>• Influential blogs or social media</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Link sellers</li> <li>• Broken links</li> <li>• Damaging links</li> </ul>

FIGURE 10. Factors in building and refreshing links (Dodson 2016, 36-37)

With a collaboration with a PR team, one company can take advantages of current B2B customers in extending reciprocal links and getting more credibility (Leak et al 2012, 51). Indeed, the links from local and associated organization will bring more authority for the website in SE ranking. Especially, the relevance to the government websites are highly indexed. (Dodson 2016, 37.)

Furthermore, reviving the outdated and irrelevant links is also important in increasing the link popularity (Dodson 2016, 38). As stated before, trying to extend link farms without connection in keywords and content will be punished by the search engines (Gay et al 2007, 215). Therefore, towards link selling, the company has to be careful and should take risks from this tactic (Leak et al 2012, 51). Instead of buying links, the company had better check and replace the irrelevant links in time. Broken links are the pages deleted that cannot be redirected and damaging links are irrelevant links within the website. (Dodson 2016, 37.)

Last but not least, the prevailing and compelling content in links of the website is the main reason for the online audiences recommending the helpful links to other users. It helps grow link popularity by attracting target audiences and ensure the credibility in the industry. (Gay et al 2007, 217.)

### 3.5 Analyze

After any marketing launch, it is necessary to measure the factors contributing the success of this strategy. The measurement data after analysed become valid information, giving guidance to improve the SEO strategy in next turns. (Dodson 2016, 8.)

Before selecting the measurement tools, it is a must to know about the website's position, traffics and conversion. According to the findings of the current website status, it assists to decide the SEO objectives. With defined SEO goals, the company is able to choose the right metrics to

measure the success. (Dodson 2016, 40.) In figure 5, there is a collection of typical SEO goals and appropriate metrics.

In accordance with Dodson (2016, 15), generally there are four KPIs for measuring the SEO effectiveness:

- Position: refers to the ranking on SERP. Google supplies SEO tools such as Google Search Console and Moz to enhance the position in the indexed listings.
- Traffic: this metric counts the amount of searches for particular terms and the conversion rate is calculated on the traffic volumes. Google Analytics is used to check traffic sources, numbers of visitors and searches completed against relevant keywords.
- Engagement measures how long the visitors stay at a website and what they prefer to find on the website. Engagement reflects the validity and user-friendliness of a website.
- Conversion: is the measurement of how positive the web traffic affects to the business goals. Clearly, the conversion rate reflects how many sales, leads and inbound calls over the traffic volumes.

To sum up, in order to reach SEO objectives, the business has to understand the search engine's mechanism and itself website (Dodson 2016, 7). The website at top of SERPs is not only search-engine friendly but also customer-centric. Without evergreen and valuable content, the company's website cannot attract visitors and gain authority in its industry. (Charlesworth 2009, 192.) The knowledge of SEO also ends the theoretical framework. Thus, in the next chapter, the author introduces the first part of the empirical research: research methods and data analysis.

#### 4 EMPIRICAL RESEARCH & DEVELOPMENT PLAN

Due to the business secrecy, the chapter is limited only for the case company. Here the author would introduce the time schedule for conducting the research.



FIGURE 11. The research process

The research was initiated in December 2017. In the first step, the author gathered the theories associated with the thesis topic, which are the foundation for the empirical part. The theoretical part includes the knowledge of search engine optimization and the buyer making-decision process, which are sourced from the credible books and authors.

According to the search engine optimization practices, the author conducted the empirical research. The findings of the empirical research are the foundation to the development plan for website's content. The website's content is improved so as to attract more leads and engage customers closely.

## 5 CONCLUSION & SUMMARY

The chapter summarizes all the information about the thesis, includes the research answer, the research review and the summary.

### 5.1 The research answer

The thesis insisted on improving the website's content for lead generation and customer engagement by SEO practices. The main thesis question was: "How to apply SEO practices in improving website's content to generate leads and engage with customers?"

The concept of search engine optimization explains the problem-solving to a website so that the website can be the most adaptable with search engines' algorithm and the most relevant to the buyer's query as possible. The 4P content marketing process and the four stage SEO procedure were integrated for improving the B2B website's content. Any website includes on-line and off-line performances. On-line performances includes the visible content that website users can interact with such as articles, videos, graphics etc., and the underlying content that search engines see and is called the source code. Meanwhile, the off-line performance emphasizes on the link building of the website, which shows how many quality links that the website has in itself and from other sites. The researcher took a command of SEO practices for designing the development plan.

### 5.2 Validity and Reliability

The research aims to answer the research issue, which is how to improve the website's content so that it will attract leads and engage customers. In order to find out the research answer, the researcher needed to go through theories of B2B buying journey and search engine optimization.

B2B buyers nowadays depends mainly on the web-searches to acquire lots of knowledge and experiences of suppliers and products before

purchases. The industrial buyer refer to the B2B effective marketing approaches, of which is search engine optimization on a B2B website.

The theories of search engine optimization were obtained to give the author the practical knowledge of how to optimize a website. The details of the practical research and the development plan are confidential information, so the author do not demonstrate them publicly.

To sum up, the research found out the logical and systematic problem-solving for the research issue by the qualitative data methods. The research was practice-based and succeeded in forming the development plan for the website with a view to generate leads and engage customers. The validity and reliability of the thesis are secured.

### 5.3 Summary

In fact, the online content has influenced on the B2B purchase making-decision process, when over 90% B2B buyers spend two third of their buying journeys on finding and choosing suppliers and products on B2B websites (Brito 2017; Cebglobal 2018).

Among the popular online marketing strategies, search engine optimization is the most powerful tool to make a website become the efficient marketing channel. Thus, the thesis aims to apply search engine optimization practices into improving the website's content for lead generation and customer engagement.

In the theoretical part, the understanding of various B2B buyers in the buying journey reveals the needs and concerns of buyers in purchase making decisions which the website has to provide the solutions via its content; besides, the knowledge of Search Engine Optimization refers to the practical process of refining the website so that it will be listed and positioned successfully by search engines.

The empirical part and the development plan are the intellectual property of the case company, therefore they can not be shown publicly.

In conclusion, it is necessary for the case company to upgrade the website for gaining leads and supporting customers, together with the other B2B marketing practices. Due to the changes in the buyer's behaviors and the developments in search engines' algorithms over time, the website should be continually upgraded to be search engine friendly and customer centric.



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