

SEO Fundamentals Facilitator's Guide

Overview

Teachers and trainers can use this Facilitator's Guide to lead workshops for the lynda.com SEO Fundamentals course. It contains discussion questions and exercises followed by a glossary of key terms that you can choose to use individually or with a group. The guide follows the same order as the course so you can use material for whichever chapter you're reviewing.

Workbook

Chapter 1: Overview of Search Engine Optimization

1. **Discussion:** Share which search engines you use regularly, explaining your experiences with each. Do you use certain search engines to find particular types of content?
2. **Discussion:** How often do you conduct searches on a mobile device and how do you use those results?
3. **Discussion:** Explain the difference between organic listings and paid listings. What do you think the benefits or drawbacks are to each? Which has led to more traffic and conversion on your website?
4. **Exercise:** Search engines determine the authority of a web page or a domain by evaluating the links pointing to it. What factors do you personally consider when evaluating the authority and credibility of a website—or even a search engine listing (paid or organic)?
5. **Exercise:** Investigate which web pages and domains link to your website. Using Google, type "link: yourdomain.com" in the search box, replacing "yourdomain.com" with your domain. Note: searching with or without a space after the colon gives you slightly different results. Using Yahoo!, type "linkdomain: yourdomain.com" in the search box, replacing "yourdomain.com" with your domain, making sure to leave a space after the colon.

Chapter 2: Keywords: The Foundation of SEO

1. **Discussion:** Consider the keywords you most frequently search for and discuss which websites you most often see in the top ten results. What characteristics do those websites share? Do different search engines display different results for the same keyword?

2. **Exercise:** Identify a keyword and write it in the header of a document. Under that keyword create two columns, writing the name of a different search engine at the top of each column. Search for your keyword with each search engine, listing the top ten web addresses displayed by each one. Are the results similar or different? How do the results change your perception of each search engine?
3. **Exercise:** Write down 10 keywords relevant to your organization, using the Google Keyword Tool at <https://adwords.google.com/o/KeywordTool> to analyze each keyword. Next to each keyword write down a.) how competitive the word is, b.) the number of global monthly searches for that keyword, and c.) the number of local monthly searches.

Chapter 3: Content Optimization: How You View Your Page

1. **Discussion:** Share three websites you regularly visit and indicate what you feel are the strengths and weaknesses of each, noting how “user friendly” you feel they are. Are there common characteristics “good” websites share that you can apply to your own efforts?
2. **Discussion:** Consider the three scenarios below and discuss how you’d provide clarity and quality to each of the audience groups that are visiting the “Explore California” website for information: a.) a resident of California planning a one-day backpacking trip near her home; b.) a father in Massachusetts planning a two-week vacation in California for a family of four; c.) an international visitor from Japan interested in cycling across the state.
3. **Exercise:** Search one keyword using a search engine of your choice, and then identify the website that appears first in the organic listing and the website that appears 20th in the organic listing. Create two columns on a sheet of paper, adding these URLs at the top of each one. In each column list as many characteristics about each website as you can easily identify.

Chapter 4: Content Optimization: Technical SEO

1. **Discussion:** What are some tools and/or strategies you have used or considered using to ensure your code is clean and your website’s pages are optimized?
2. **Exercise:** Ensure your code is compliant with web standards by using the free online code validator provided by the World Wide Web Consortium (W3C) at <http://validator.w3.org>, making note of any errors or inconsistencies that are revealed. For mobile content, use <http://validator.w3.org/mobile/>.
3. **Exercise:** Search engines often discover new content by reading a website’s XML sitemap (a specially formatting listing of a the site’s pages). For this exercise, take a

moment to learn more about the specific syntax and how to create XML sitemaps by visiting <http://www.sitemaps.org>.

4. **Exercise:** The robots.txt file allows you to control how search engines crawl through and index your website. For this exercise, take a moment to learn more about creating robots.txt rules by visiting <http://www.robotstxt.org>.
5. **Exercise:** Microformats give us a special syntax to use to help search engines identify very specific types of content on your pages. For this exercise, head over to <http://www.schema.org> and browse the various types of content that have supported microformats.

Chapter 5: Long-Term Content Planning

1. **Discussion:** Does your organization have a plan in place to manage your online reputation? If so, explain what it is and share your thoughts about it, describing any experiences with it. If your organization does not have a policy, what are some issues you want it to address?
2. **Discussion:** Defining and understanding your target audience is the first step to writing content for them. A great tool to help with this process is the Forrester Technographics Profile Tool at http://empowered.forrester.com/tool_consumer.html. Enter the age, country, and gender of your target audience to gain insight into how your end consumer uses different technologies today.
3. **Exercise:** Go to monitter.com—a real-time Twitter search tool that enables you to monitor a set of keywords on Twitter--and enter one keyword into the box at the top and click the “add column” button. Alternately, click the “Load Trends” link to load three columns with current Twitter trends.

Chapter 6: Link Building Strategies

1. **Discussion:** When people post and share links to your content via social media or indicate its quality by clicking a button, search engines notice. Translation: social media influences SEO. Considering this, make a list of three social media tools you use, sharing your thoughts about each. Explain your experiences with each and report what impact it has made on you or your organization.
2. **Discussion:** Having quality content and a robust network of colleagues and customers are two ways to generate links to your website. Knowing this, what are some natural channels and who are some key people you can use to promote your content?

3. **Exercise:** Having a listing in the Yahoo! directory is a way to generate traffic to your website. For this exercise, visit <https://ecom.yahoo.com/dir/submit/intro/> and follow the instructions to submit your website.

Chapter 7: Measuring SEO Effectiveness

1. **Discussion:** Consider additional ways you can track and evaluate the effectiveness of your SEO efforts beyond common Keyword Performance Indicators (KPI). Are there terms and strategies specific to your industry or market segment?
2. **Exercise:** If you haven't yet configured goals in your Google Analytics account to track business outcomes, visit <http://www.google.com/analytics> to do so. Once you've set your goals, click on a goal set to see how your keywords are performing with respect to your business objectives.
3. **Exercise:** Social Crawlytics is one tool you can use to measure and manage social media. For this exercise, visit <http://socialcrawlytics.com>, log in with your Twitter account and enter a website address in the Dashboard screen to initiate the crawling process.
4. **Exercise:** Google Analytics IQ Lessons offers lessons to prepare for the Google Analytics Individual Qualification (IQ) test or to become a more knowledgeable about metrics. Visit <http://www.google.com/intl/en/analytics/iq.html> and watch at least one of the videos in any of the four available categories: First Steps, Fundamentals, In-Depth Analysis, and Interpreting Reports.

Chapter 8: SEO for Ecommerce

1. **Discussion:** Imagine you discover negative feedback online about your organization and its products. Do you delete these comments and/or block the users? Or do you engage them?
2. **Discussion:** Customer product reviews and testimonials and social media sharing may improve your SEO. Knowing this, consider one ecommerce website you use, noting if it includes the functionality suggested above. If it does, which functionality? If it does not, which features would work best on it?
3. **Exercise:** Research five possible resources that can translate your content, listing each one in a row with each feature you plan to compare identified in a column.

Chapter 9: Local Search

1. **Discussion:** Consider your experiences searching for local businesses and share insights into those you've found most frequently, as well as those whose listings have been the most helpful.
2. **Discussion:** Share your experiences reviewing a business using Google+ Local, Yahoo! Local, Yelp, City Search, or other similar websites. Likewise, has your business ever been reviewed?
3. **Exercise:** Review the steps required to create a Google+ Local entry at: <http://support.google.com/plus/bin/answer.py?hl=en&answer=1713911>. Also, take time to learn more about how consumers can use Google+ Local at <http://www.google.com/+learnmore/local/>.

Chapter 10: International SEO

1. **Discussion:** What is your level of awareness of search engines in other countries? Have you ever used any of them? Were your experiences positive, negative, or neutral?
2. **Discussion:** Whatever KPI's you previously identified to measure your SEO performance, how might you modify them within the context of each regionalized section of your website? In what ways will your regional and international efforts require a different approach?
3. **Exercise:** Create two columns on a sheet of paper, making a list of your concerns about international SEO in one column. In the other column list any corresponding solutions for each concern.

Glossary of key terms

analytics: In regards to SEO, analytics refers to gathering data about a website's traffic and making decisions about that website's performance.

blended search results: Search results including content beyond traditional website listings, such as video clips, audio tracks, contact information for local businesses, maps, images, prices for products, news articles, and content friends have shared.

bounce rate: The percentage of visitors that leave your site after seeing only one page.

canonical page: The preferred page among pages with identical content on a website.

citation: Any mention of your business name, address and phone number on the web, a combination of information often referred to as NAP (Name, Address, Phone number).

competition: The number of Google Adwords customers competing for a particular keyword.

content delivery network (CDN): A geographically distributed system that allows clients to access the same content from the nearest server.

content optimization: The process of improving the quality and relevancy of your site's content.

distance: A measure of how geographically close a potential search result is from the searcher.

editorial calendar: A calendar that maps out upcoming publications and deadline dates for submissions.

engagement: A measure of how much time visitors spend on your site and how many pages they view.

HTML: Acronym for "Hypertext Markup Language," the standardized code used to build web pages

internet protocol (IP) address: A numerical label assigned to each device (e.g. computer or printer) on a computer network.

JavaScript: A programming language used to make web pages interactive.

key performance indicators (KPI): Criteria you can use to evaluate the effectiveness of your SEO efforts. Common KPI's include: average order values, business leads, contact forms, driving directions, non-branded keyword searches, organic search traffic, phone calls, revenue, subscribers, social followers, sign ups, and target keyword rankings.

keywords: The search terms people enter into search engines.

keyword distribution spreadsheet: A document that helps you organize and document the content of your site to support the keywords you're targeting. It also serves as an excellent resource for your copywriters and will help streamline workflows across all the different members of your website production team.

keyword categorization: A process used to group keywords into themes or topics.

keyword research: The foundational piece in SEO that will help you understand what people are typing into search engines, how frequently they do it, how relevant those terms are to your business objectives, and how competitive those terms will be to try and rank for.

long-tail keywords: Descriptive keywords that are used in less-common variations than other, more frequently used search terms.

meta tags: Information placed into the web page's code that is not displayed on the web page, but help search engines understand what the page is about.

microformats: Syntax that helps identify specific types of content.

organic listings: Content displayed in response to a query that has not been paid for, but has been identified by a search engine as relevant to your query based on its strong SEO characteristics.

paid listings: Paid advertisements (managed by programs like Google's AdWords) that appear in your search results alongside organic listings, usually in a specially marked area of your search engine results page (SERP).

prominence: A measure of how well-known a listing is across the web.

query: Keywords, phrases, or questions you enter into a search engine when you desire information.

relevance: How well a listing matches a user's search term(s).

robots.txt file: A file you or your webmaster can create in the main root folder of your site, and when search engines see it, they'll read it and follow those rules that you've set.

search engine optimization (SEO): The process of making changes on and off your website to gain more exposure in search engine results.

search engine results page (SERP): The format search engines use to display the web pages and other content they've identified as relevant to the keywords which a user used in a search.

search volume: The number of searches per month for a particular keyword.

style sheet: A set of statements that allow web designers to control layout and style of pages.

uniform resource locator (URL): The address of a web page that corresponds to its IP address (e.g. <http://www.example.com/topic/some-page.html>).

URL parameters: Extra bits of data appended to the end of URLs used to do a variety of different things. Sometimes they control what content shows up on the page, other times they have nothing to do with the content.

user-generated content: Content created by website visitors.

World Wide Web Consortium (W3C): An international community where member organizations, a full-time staff, and the public work together to develop web standards.

XML sitemap: A listing of your pages' content in a special format that search engines can easily read.