

THE POWER OF SEO

Distributors can use Search Engine Optimization (SEO) to drive quality traffic to their websites.

What's the big deal about SEO for electrical distributors? It's important because 70% of the people who want to buy your products go to Google first. In fact, thousands of people have looked you over (if they can find you) and bought somewhere else, without you ever knowing it.

So, the answer to the question of how important SEO (Search Engine Optimization) is to your distribution business is simple: It's extremely important. Why? Because if you aren't on the first page of a Google search, you don't exist. You must learn how to use Google to your advantage. Two ways exist to use Google: buy AdWords from them, or deliver relevant content on your website that Google can serve up on page one to people who search and sell their AdWords. In other words, there's a relationship between your content and Google's ability to make money.

The first way makes Google richer. The second makes you richer. Sometimes you need both, but smart marketers realize that the second one is really the way to go. The second way happens to be the essence of SEO and is governed by two things: content and linking.

The theory of SEO. Content must be generated and distributed on websites for Google to find and index in their results. The more that's indexed, the more likely it will be on the first page of a Google search. When the content is on your website, you are on page one. When the content is on someone else's website, they are. The objective is always having people end up on your website.

By Jim Nowakowski



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Linking means having other websites link to your site. Or, it means linking within your website from one piece of content to another. One of our clients described it this way: "I want our website to be circular, always keeping the visitors engaged, consuming our content." Those are also the two basics of SEO. The question is how you do it.

SEO up close. If someone Googles "LED lighting," 1,210,000 results are delivered. There's not enough time in a month to go through them all. The theory and practice of SEO is that customers and prospects don't get past page one in their desire for information. That's why your company needs to be on page one.

You get on page one by buying AdWords from Google (you purchase "LED Lighting" or something else so when people search your ad is there). Or, you

build into your content the words you want people to use when they find you.

On page one in a search for "LED lighting" there are ads. We believe all ads are largely bypassed because people don't read ads anymore. Also, because of the digital ad fraud that exists, many ads are not even seen by searchers. People use ad blockers like Ghostery (<https://www.ghostery.com/>) to great effect.

To illustrate, 50% of ad impressions served on Internet Explorer were to non-human traffic (FraudLogix, 2016). Google must study this problem because they have the most to lose as it spreads — who will buy AdWords if the ads can't be seen?

An "organic" search is the best — the results on page one that are not paid ads. This is the content on your website that Google has found, indexed and served

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up to people when they search specific terms you have put on your page.

The best “organic” link in our example in the Google search for “LED lighting” is <https://www.1000bulbs.com/category/led-light-bulbs/>. It appears just below the ads and doesn’t have the [AD] icon next to it, so people know it’s “organic.”

That website has 75,800 pages. It uses those words or variations of those words (note the page title has /led-light-bulbs as its title) as follows on its website:

- LED Light* (31 times), where “*” means any variations, like “Lights” or “lighting” etc.

- LED (449 times)

- Lighting (52 times)

- Light (354 times)

They understand content and its relationship with Google indexing. The only way you can compete against that is by buying those words from Google or creating your own content loaded with such content.

The second organic search result in this example is <https://www.ledlightinginc.com/>. Note that *1000bulbs.com* beat this website in results, even though this website actually has the words “led lighting” in their name! That is difficult to do. This company has 415 pages on their website, a fraction of what the first one had.

The next results in the organic lineup were:

- https://www.homedepot.com/c/SPC_LF_LEDLightFixtures

- <https://www.energy.gov/energysaver/save-electricity-and-fuel/lighting-choices-save-you-money/led-lighting>

- <https://www.superbrightleds.com/>

- <https://www.lampsplus.com/>

[products/type_led/](https://www.ylighting.com/led-lighting/)

- <https://www.ylighting.com/led-lighting/>

- https://www.energystar.gov/products/lighting_fans/light_bulbs/learn_about_led_bulbs

You’ll recognize government websites among them and other web retailers (webtailers). Surprisingly, major distributors are not among these results. And as a basis of comparison, Energy Star’s website has 25,400 pages — again far less than *1000bulbs.com*. However, Energy Star also covers many other products besides LED Lighting.

Learn from companies that publish content on their websites that incorporates the words and phrases that people use to search.

Go wide or go deep? Part of your assessment of what you should be doing with your SEO involves guessing how people search. Not how all people search — just how your customers search. You need to figure out what they type into the search bar when they are looking for information. In the example above, what terms do they type in when they want information on LED Lighting?

I learned the importance of this when I wrote a blog called “Conversation from Hell.” The blog was about a conversation I had with a magazine representative who didn’t know what she was talking about.

One day several months later, I typed in the web browser “conversation from hell” and lo and behold, my blog was the top result on page one (try typing in “conversation from hell” for yourself and you’ll see). That’s when I realized the power of content. There were no ads around those words. (Who but the devil

would buy them? And he doesn’t need to advertise.) Surprisingly, even some media outlet publishers asked me how much I pay Google for that position. I say, “I can’t tell you,” implying it’s way too much. But you know the answer already if you are reading this: \$0. It’s SEO.

Therefore, figuring out how people search is important to your SEO planning. In other words, how deep or how wide do you go? For example, if I type, “the best LED lighting for my office” into the search bar, 802,000,000 results are delivered. On page one, of the 17 results delivered, seven are ads (four at the top, three on the bottom). That tells you that people are buying those words. If you examine the organic results, you’ll see what those companies are doing to get on page one. Here is a brief summary.

- <https://www.superiorlighting.com> has a blog called, “LED Office Lighting: the Best Color Temperature to Increase Productivity.”

- <https://www.amazon.com> has LED Office Lights. Note that Superior Lighting beat Amazon in this search.

- <https://smallbiztrends.com> has a post entitled “A Guide to LED Office Lighting for Your Small Business.”

- <https://www.earthled.com> has an article, “Best LED Light Bulbs and Lighting for Home Office Use” They also have another search result with an article entitled, “How to Choose the Best LED Light Bulb for Any Room in Your Home.” So, they doubled the chances of someone clicking to them by having two content articles.

- <https://www.myledlightingguide.com> has a page titled, “Commercial LED Office Lighting”

There are also pages from *www.modern.place*, *www.nationalbusinessfurniture.com*, and a few more. The point is they are all articles or what the industry calls blogs. Blogs are the key to success in achieving page one success in SEO. Why?

Google reads everything. There has been a running debate in the advertising world about long copy versus short copy. If you are striving for SEO, you should have no more fight: long copy wins because Google will read everything. One

of the biggest mistakes people make is posting a photo without copy. Google can't see images. It sees the ALT tags (the copy behind the scenes) for the images, but doesn't give them as much value as regular content. Google feeds on copy. The old saying, "A picture is worth a thousand words" is true. But, if you are striving for better SEO, you better write out those thousand words for Google because Google is blind.

SEO takes time. Unlike AdWords, achieving optimal SEO takes time. But, your patience will be rewarded as Google indexes your content and your ranking improves. This is especially true because who reads ads anymore? Along with the growing fraud around ads, people just don't go to the Internet for advertising. They go for content. It's similar to how you bypass ads on television — you DVR your programs now.

Your investment in content will help you achieve results. Content is the real battle, but the other is linking, as mentioned above. Linking is creating links within your own website, and to websites in related sites when appropriate. Also, you need to drive people to your website, which is achieved through publicity and content distribution outside of your website. In fact, every marketing activity you do should always have a call to action, and that call is to visit your website.

For example, you might publish a white paper, post it on your website, send a notice out to your customers to "pick it up" from your website and share it with their customers. All links should lead back to your website where the white paper is located.

This technique also takes time and money. Advertising is so attractive because it's virtually instantaneous; that is, you purchase the advertising words, you see the results on page one. However, it's not results — or response — that's the key. It's conversion of that response. The most often heard comment we hear about ads is that people who come through that channel are "not qualified." Content consumption — not clicks or "hits" (an acronym that veteran digital marketers say

stands for "How Idiots Track Success") — is the key to achieving better results. And content consumption is measured with forms on your website, and with follow-up on the people who have visited and engaged you.

The president of a major multi-million-dollar company told me something early in my career that I never forgot.

"Remember, Jim, you're only as good as your last ad," he said. I served that company for more than 20 years because I never forgot what he told me. Today, we are only as good as the last search. It's the same premise, only there are a whole new set of rules for being "good." Let me know if you have questions. And thanks for reading. ■



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