Introduction

Content writing should be a very important part of your SEO strategy. To understand why and to provide some context to the content of this eBook, we will introduce the very basics of SEO in this chapter.

What does Google do?

How does Google find your site?

Search engines like Google follow links. They follow links from one web page to another web page. A search engine like Google consists of a crawler, an index and an algorithm. A crawler follows the links on the web. It goes around the internet 24/7 and saves the HTML-version of a page in a gigantic database, called the index. This index is updated if Google has come around your website and found a new or revised version of it. Depending on the traffic on your site and the amount of changes you make on your website, Google comes around more or less often.

For Google to know of the existence of your website, there first has to be a link from another site in the index – one it already knows – to your site. Following that link will lead to the first crawler-session and the first save in the index.

Google's secret algorithm

After indexing your website, Google can show your website in the search results.

Google has a specific algorithm that decides which pages are shown in which order. How this algorithm works is a secret. Nobody knows exactly which factors decide the ordering of the search results. Moreover, factors and their importance change very often. Testing and experimenting gives us a relatively good feel for the important factors and the changes in these factors.

Google's results page

Google's result page shows 7 or 10 links to sites which fit your search the best. We refer to these results as the organic search results. If you click to the second page, more results are shown. Above these 10 blue links are two or three *paid* links, most of the time. These links are ads; people have paid Google to put these links at the top of the site when people search for a specific term. Prices for these ads vary greatly, depending on the competitiveness of the search term. Similar ads could appear on the right of Google's search result pages as well.

The value of links for search engines

It's very important to have a basic understanding of how Google and most other search engines use links: they use the number of links pointing to a page to determine how important that page is. Both internal links (from the own website) as well as external links (from

other websites) could help in the ranking of a website in Google. Some links are more important than others: links from websites that have a lot of links themselves are generally more important than links from small websites with little external links.

Universal search

Next to the organic and the paid results, Google also embeds news items, pictures and videos in its search results. This embedment is called universal search.

What is Search Engine Optimization?

High ranking in organic search results

Search Engine Optimization (SEO) is the profession that attempts to optimize sites to make them appear in a high position in the organic search results. In order to do so, SEO tries to fit a website to Google's algorithm. Although Google's algorithm remains secret, almost a decade of experience in SEO has resulted in a pretty good idea about the important factors. In our view, the factors in Google's algorithm can be divided into two categories:

1 There are *on-page* factors which decide the ranking of your website. These factors include technical issues (e.g. the quality of your code) and more textual issues (e.g. structure of your site and text, use of words). The textual issues will receive in depth attention in this book. For more information about technical issues, check out our blogs about (technical) SEO.

2 There are the *off-page* factors. These factors include the links to your site. The more other (relevant) sites link to your website, the higher your ranking in Google will be. We will not go into off-page factors in this book. You can read more about link building and other off-page factors in the eBook written by Paddy Moogan. Get it here.

Make an awesome website!

In the following chapters, we will teach you how to do proper content SEO. At Yoast, we give SEO advice to (small) website owners and large consultancy clients (the Guardian, Facebook). Joost de Valk began his career in SEO over 8 years ago. And although Google has changed its algorithm quite a few times, most of the advice we give at Yoast has remained the same over the years. And this advice is very simple: you just have to make sure your site is very good. Do not use any 'tricks', because they usually don't work in the long run, and might even backfire. Google's mission is to build the perfect search engine that helps people find what they are looking for. Making your website and your marketing strategy fit this goal is always the way to go. You can read more about making and maintaining a great website in our previous eBook.

Yoast is most famous for the WordPress SEO by Yoast plugin (WP SEO). Most of the technical aspects of SEO you should do are actually covered by our free WordPress SEO by Yoast plugin. If you are a WordPress user, installing the plugin and using the default settings already improves your SEO quite a lot. The next step is to optimize your content. That's what we will teach you in this eBook!

OhainWEB.com

Web Design & Hosting

Here is an excerpt from a publication by YOAST, whose plugin we use for Website Optimization on our server-based websites.

This excerpt addresses some basic thoughts about SEO and is an excellent introduction to the concepts used in SEO.

OhainWEB.com enables SEO through judicious use of tools and tactics with the websites we design and deliver. We call this Website Optimization

The extent of our SEO enabling depends upon the website design platform and design options selected by our client.

About the authors

Joost de Valk

Joost de Valk (1982) is a web developer, SEO and online marketer. He started his career in IT working at several companies, ranging from enterprise hosting to online marketing agencies, allowing him to work with several large businesses around the world.

Joost founded CSS3.info, the biggest CSS3 resource on the web, in 2006 and sold it in 2009. Early 2010 he built Quix, which was featured in many online publications from Mashable to Lifehacker and ReadWriteWeb.

In May of 2010 Joost founded Yoast, which focuses on software development (currently mainly WordPress plugins) and consulting in SEO, WordPress optimization and online marketing/content strategy. Current clients include the Guardian, eBay, Disney Interactive and the European Patent Office. Yoast sells multiple WordPress plugins, Website Reviews and eBooks and is expanding quickly.

Marieke van de Rakt

Marieke van de Rakt (1981) studied Sociology and Communication Sciences at the Radboud University in Nijmegen. Subsequently, she worked on a dissertation about the criminal careers of fathers and their children. She obtained her PhD in Social Sciences in january 2011. Since then, she has worked as a researcher and as a teacher at different companies and universities. As of September 2013, she focussed her attention solely on her activities at Yoast.

Having a solid academic background, Marieke focuses on (quantitative) research and on strategic management. Besides that, she loves to write texts and posts for yoast.com. Together with Joost, Michiel Heijmans and Thijs de Valk, she runs Yoast.

Marieke van de Rakt and Joost de Valk are married and live in Wijchen, the Netherlands. They have four wonderful children together.