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Your Ultimate Guide to Apartment SEO

Where to Start With SEO and How to Increase Your Property's Search Rankings

Whether you are a new marketer or a veteran with years of experience, search engine optimization (SEO) can often feel like learning a new language. It's frustrating, challenging, and takes practice, time, and a lot of patience to master.

Even when pouring money into SEO, it can often seem impossible to tell what (if anything) is happening with your efforts.

As challenging as it may be, executing and maintaining an SEO strategy can make a huge difference in attracting new residents to your apartment website, and ultimately to your property for a tour.

We've outlined a handy guide to walk you through the basic steps of establishing a healthy SEO foundation and a successful strategy.

In this guide, we'll address the following:

• Search Queries and How Residents Find You Online
• Short- and Long-Tail Keywords
• Heading Tags (H1s, H2s, etc.)
• Title Tags and Meta Descriptions
• Putting It All Together

Let's jump in!

SEARCH QUERIES AND INTERACTING WITH SEARCH ENGINES

Before we dive into specific SEO tactics, it's important to know how search queries work and when, why, and where renters find your property online. Understanding how your buyer persona interacts with the search engine is key to marketing and the first step to implementing a successful SEO strategy.

There are four types of search queries people make that you should be aware of:

1 **Want to "Do" Something**

This is when residents want to try a new sushi place or need help with getting things done.

3 **I Want to "Go" Somewhere**

This is when residents want to go somewhere on the Internet or find a specific website, like when they type your apartment name directly into the search bar.

2 **I Want to "Know" Something**

This is when residents want to know which Dallas apartments offer a city view or which luxury apartments feature a swimming pool and a fitness center.

4 **I Want to "Buy" Something**

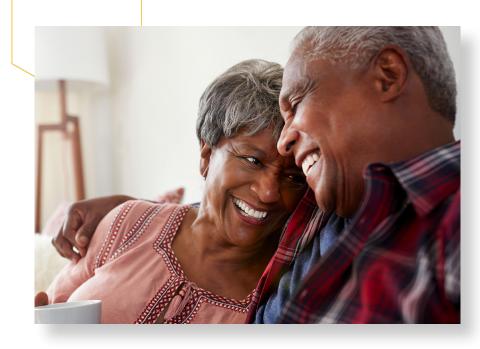This is when residents are ready to lease with your property or when they are ready to make a purchase.

Knowing the types of search intent for your prospective renter can aid you in keyword research and implementation. For example, if your buyer persona is a senior who is 55+ years old, they are not as likely to search for "luxury apartments near Dallas bars" as a Millennial or Gen Z would.

Therefore, your website does not need to include long-tail keywords or phrases that focus on nightlife near your property. Instead, you would want to focus on your property's accessibility to grocery stores, local ERs and doctor's offices, pet-friendly amenities, and other on-site conveniences.

Seeing Your Apartment Website as the Search Engines Do

One of the best ways to see your website the way search engines do and check your SEO status is with online tools. You might think your SEO strategy is on point, but a quick Google search still shows your property on page 10+ of search results.

There is a seemingly unlimited number of helpful SEO tools in the market, some free and some paid.

Swifty Tip:

Tools like SEO-browser.com, Google's cache, SEOMoz, Link Graph, and others can help you see what elements of your website content are indexable and offer tips for to improve your search ranking.

SHORT- AND LONG-TAIL KEYWORDS

When it comes to choosing your focus keyword(s), be clear, descriptive, and think like your persona. What would he or she search for?

Keywords are not intended to be used to rank highly for all keywords, but to rank highly for the keywords that renters are searching for when they want what your website has to offer. Keywords are critical to both user experience and SEO.

How to Conduct Keyword Research

Being able to pick what keywords or keyword phrases (known as long-tail keywords) a person might type to find your site is key to optimizing your site for SEO. If you know your buyer personas well, these may come easily, but sometimes it can be difficult to narrow in on what people will actually search vs. what you think they might search. In these cases, keyword research is important.

There are a number of ways to approach keyword research:

- Type your intended keywords into the search bar and see what kind of sites appear.

- Look at what your competitors are trying to rank for. This is as simple as looking at their site and looking at what words come up over again, especially if they appear for headers or titles.

- Interview your current and prospective residents via surveys or phone calls to see what types of things they are searching for when looking at a place to live.

- Use a keyword planning tool.

The last bullet in this list is a more complex but strategic method that's worth doing, especially if you intend to delve deep into the world of SEO and keywords. The SEO tools we mentioned in the section above are all great options to achieve this. These tools allow you to type in your intended keywords to get a measure of how difficult it may be to rank for (a low number being easier to rank for) and what kind of search volume the keyword gets. They also can suggest or show related keywords. Once you have collected and gathered the keywords you believe to be most relevant, the next step is to implement them.

HEADING TAGS

So, you know your buyer persona and what they are searching for and you've got your list of focus keywords ... now what?

Now, it's time to start implementing these findings into every piece of content on your website, including blogs and landing pages.

Let's Start With Your Headlines

When it comes to search engine optimization (SEO), there are two key factors that influence search results: relevance and popularity.

Imagine the World Wide Web as a network of unlimited stops in the New York City subway system. Search engines crawl the web through an index of billions of files and documents, then provide users with a ranked list of the sites determined as the most relevant.

How Are These Sites Determined Relevant?

Well, search engines typically assume that the more popular the site is, the more valuable the information it provides must be. To further determine relevance and popularity, search engines scan your headlines or heading tags. HTML has six different heading

tags — H1, H2, H3, H4, H5, and H6. The H1 is considered the most important tag and typically appears at the top of the page or document, and the H6 is the least important. The tag sizes are often formatted from large to small.

H1 - HEADLINE TEXT
H2 - Subhead Text
H3 - Subhead Text

H4 - Subhead Text

Lorem ipsum dolor sit amet, consectetur adipiscing elit. In aliquet risus ex, ut consequat justo tincidunt ut. Nulla id dapibus dolor. Mauris egestas magna ut est dignissim.

What's an H1?

80% of Google's first-page search results use an H1.

If you look closely at this guide, you'll notice there are heading tags. The title on the first page is an H1, the next title after that is an H2, and so on and so forth.

H1s have always been considered a significant ranking factor. Here are a few things to keep in mind about your H1:

- H1s are one of the most important on-page SEO and user-experience elements.

- Only use one H1 per page.

- The H1 tag will often be similar to your <page title tag>. (More on title tags later.)

- The H1 will often be the title of your article, blog, or page title.

- The H1 should be medium length (about 20 to 70 characters).

TITLE TAGS AND META DESCRIPTIONS

What Is a Title Tag?

A title tag is an HTML element that specifies the title of your web page. If you have ever searched for something on Google, then you've seen title tags. These are displayed on search engine results pages (SERPs) as the clickable headline and serve an important purpose for SEO, usability, and social media sharing.

Just as important as an H1 tag, title tags play a significant factor in helping search engines understand what your page is about. It's also often the first impression people will have of your page.

How to Write a Good Title Tag

1 **Watch the Length**

Make sure your title is not too long or it may get cut off in the SERP with an ellipsis. Try to keep your title under 60 characters, while keeping in mind that some letters are wider than others. Avoid using all caps titles as it may be difficult for search visitors to read and will limit the number of characters Google will display.

2 **Don't Use Too Many Keywords**

Don't create a bad user experience by stuffing your title full of keywords or repeat variations of the same keyword. These title tags are not only bad practice for attracting visitors, it can also get you into trouble with search engines.

3 **Give Each Page a Unique Title**

In other words, don't use the same title for every page of your website. Unique titles tell search engines that your page is valuable and it can also help drive click-through rates.

What Is a Meta Description?

The meta description is a short description of a page's content; it's the snippet of text you see displayed beneath a listing in search results.

While there is no direct ranking benefit from meta descriptions, there is an indirect benefit. Meta descriptions can help with click-through-rates (CTRs) which Google uses to increase your ranking. The higher CTR, the higher your ranking, and with an informative and clear-cut meta description, you can increase that rate.

How to Write a Good Meta Description

1 **Limit the Description to 155 Characters**

While you want to keep your meta description short and snappy, you also want to take enough space to get your message across. In Google, meta descriptions are displayed as 120 to 156 characters.

2 **Make It Actionable**

One of the keys to a great meta description is to use actionable words and avoid passive text. Make the description not only an informative synopsis of the web page but also exciting, active, and motivating to grab the searcher's interest.

3   Include a Call-to-Action

Consider the meta description as an additional sales text. Use call-to-actions like learn more, try for free, get it now, etc.

4   Use Your Focus Keyword

Google will be more included to feature your meta description if your search keyword is included in the text.

5   Make Sure It Matches Your Page Content

One of the most important tips for writing a good meta description is to make sure this snippet matches what's on your web page. Google is smart and will penalize your site if you attempt to trick visitors into clicking by writing a bogus meta description. Not to mention that misleading descriptions can increase your bounce rate.

PUTTING IT ALL TOGETHER

While there is much more to an SEO strategy than just keyword research and meta descriptions (i.e., HTML, Javascript, Alt Tags, etc.), these SEO tactics are what will kickstart your strategy and help your content team shift your property from page 10 to hopefully page 1 of Google search results.

The important thing to remember is that SEO must be built from the ground up, meeting the searcher where they're at (with a problem) and holding their hand at every step along the way toward a purchase (the solution). This is where persona development is crucial as they reveal where those users are truly coming from.

Ready to take a ground-up approach to your apartment SEO? We can help you with that!

Trust the experts at Swifty to get your property ranked higher in search results, so you can start turning more leads into leases.

Visit us online to get started! BeSwifty.com