A guide to
OFF-PAGE SEO

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PART OF NEWSQUEST MEDIA GROUP

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What is off-page SEO?

Off-page SEO refers to actions taken elsewhere on the web that still has an impact upon your own website and its visibility.

The logic behind this is that the more your website is referred to by other sites, the more trustworthy and high quality your content must be. Also, if you own social media channels and are featured on listings pages such as Google My Business, then it can show to search engines that your enterprise is active.

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Why is off-page SEO important?

There are several reasons as to why off-page SEO is important. Ultimately, your off-page SEO actions will directly impact your Domain Authority (DA) score. Your DA score is a search engine ranking score that forecasts whether a website is likely to rank on search engine results pages (SERPs). The Score ranges between 1-100, and the higher the number your website scores, the more likely it is for your website to rank.

Benefits of Off-Page SEO
There is a reason to encourage off-page SEO activities, and that's the fact that it provides huge benefits for your website's visibility.

Every link your website receives from other sources on the web acts like an endorsement (why else would another site link to yours if you didn't offer quality content?). If there is ever a tie-break situation when your website and another site are at level playing fields in terms of matching for a search result, these external site links will work towards determining which website should rank higher.

It's important to bear in mind that whilst there are many benefits of off-page SEO, these aren't awarded without a certain cost, which in this case is likely to be a time cost more than anything.

Earning a high organic ranking takes time, in some cases six months or more. This is because Google crawls, indexes and ranks your website, then carries out testing to understand how good your content is and at what position it should rank for certain search queries.

Google takes around six-months to index a website, so as well as this, you'll want to account for the time it takes for each of the off-page SEO activities you want to carry-out. Making agreements with relevant websites about guest blogging and backlinking is also likely to be a lengthy process.

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How does off-page SEO work?

Off-page SEO goes much further than link building. Whilst search engine bots may crawl your site in search of how well it should rank in SERPs, they also take into account:

- Links to your site
- Social media activity
- Listings (including reviews)
- Bookmarking

They want to see how 'active' a company is online, as well as how authoritative and trustworthy. In general, the more active a company is, the better they will do in terms of website visibility. Search engines don't want to offer searchers a 'dormant' business if there's a possibility that business has closed.

What are off-page SEO factors?

There are several significant ranking factors that make up off-page SEO activity, some of which have been mentioned above. As the key roles search engines look for in a website are authoritativeness, trustworthiness and relevance, off-page factors should never be ignored since they can offer plenty of evidence towards those roles.

Those key factors include:

- Backlinking
- Social media
- Listings profiles
- Guest blogging
- Bookmarking

Whilst the full algorithm for ranking a website isn't known to anyone but the search engines that use them, it's impossible to know the exact weighting each factor offers. However, this doesn't mean these off-page SEO elements should be ignored.

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Backlinking for Off-Page SEO

Backlinks in particular are an essential factor of off-page SEO. Search engine's view this as a marker for the quality of content on the page that has been linked it. The more links, the more likely you are to be ranked higher than competitors (although this also depends on the number of links to their webpages).

Whilst backlinking alone is a key factor of off-page SEO, there are three key varieties of links within backlinking that are categorised by how they're earned:

- Natural links
- Manually built links
- Self-created links

Natural Links
These are usually given within online blogs or articles, without any encouragement or action from the page owner that has been linked to.
For example, a gardening blogger may include a link to his favourite plant nursery.

Manually Built Links
Manually built links are much more deliberate than natural link building. They're links gained by asking businesses, influencers and/or customers to link to your website from their own platforms.

Self-Created Links
Self-created links are pretty much what their name conveys. They're links you create by setting-up listings profiles on platforms like Google My Business, as well as links included on any forums or press releases.
Be careful with self-created linking tactics, as some forms tend toward black-hat SEO, which is frowned upon by search engines and can result in your page being penalised.
As well as how links are created, whether naturally, manually or self-created, there are a number of other factors within backlinking that has an impact on SEO:
- The popularity of the linking site
- The relevance of the linking site's topic to the site being linked
- The anchor text used on the linking site
- The authoritativeness and trustworthiness of the linking site
- Domain and page authority of the linking site

This ensures both sides share the quality needed to provide helpful and relevant results to a searchers query.

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How Does Social Media Help SEO?

Social media inadvertently has an effect on your website's visibility, and is therefore a factor of off-page SEO. From simply creating a social media profile, to using it for marketing and advertising purposes, each practice provides evidence that your business is active and can provide extra links for certain pages you want to encourage audiences to visit. Top ranked websites on Google have many more social signals than the other pages ranked below.

Business Information

Firstly, creating a social media page, particularly on Facebook, can act similarly to a listings page. It's another place that holds valuable business details such as phone number, physical address and website address that are valuable for potential customers to know.

It's also another page search engines can use to compare these business details, as consistency between them is essential for the trustworthy and authoritativeness aspects of SEO. If your business address and/or phone number is contradictory across your website, listings page and social media pages, you're unlikely to rank well because of the confusion it would cause to potential customers and search engines.

Social Links and Engagement

Secondly, using social media as a form of marketing your business can also have an impact on your SEO. The links you use on your posts to promote your products/services/events etc, or the social media ads you might pay for that also links back to what you're marketing, helps increase the visibility of your business.

Each link has an influence on your business' search engine optimisation. If these posts/sponsored posts are of quality and people really engage with them, the more likely those people are going to like and link to it, which does help your ranking.

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Building your Audience

One of the great things about having social media pages (only choose the right ones for your business, don't create a profile on every platform because you think it'll help your SEO), is that there are millions (or billions in some cases) of people on each of the major platforms, which means you can reach a bigger audience than ever before.

With the ease of social sharing, it's much more likely you can appeal to a wider audience, and whilst you may want to focus locally, that doesn't necessarily mean you can't use social media to encourage visitors to your local village, town or city to purchase from you. This wider reach is likely to result in more website visitors (as long as your posts are engaging), and that in itself will help your business improve its online search ranking.

Branded Search

Social sites like Instagram are great for showing off your brand, and particularly works well for retailers, restaurants, hotels and spas. Instagram is a bit different to other social media platforms though, because there is limited use for linking back to your website, this isn't necessarily a bad thing though, and I'll tell you why.

The more followers you have on Instagram, the better, and the more likely you are to rank well on search result pages.

This is because whilst there is only a limited number of links you can use (which can't necessarily be used in posts), many people are likely to type your brand name into a search bar if they really like what they see from your business on Instagram. This means you may get what seems like more organic searches, but some may well be Instagram referrals.

If searchers also use a keyword after they type in your brand name, and that keyword is relevant to your business, you may also find you rank higher for that keyword.

As an example, FashionNova is a brand that rose through the ranks with help from Instagram, as they have over 6million followers.

What they found was that many people were typing their brand name into Google followed by their keyword 'jeans', and after 100,000+ search queries a month of 'FashionNova Jeans' Google thought (and rightly so) that it might be a good page to rank simply for the keyword 'jeans' too.

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Influence of Listings Profiles on Off-Page SEO

As mentioned above, listings profiles (or web directories) have some influence on website rankings and visibility (although not nearly as much as they used to). It's important to not view these listings pages as a source of links to your website, because they won't carry as much weighting in terms of authoritativeness than a more credible site that offers plenty of trustworthy information. Instead, it's more recommended to view them as a place to encourage website traffic and trust.

Local businesses need to preserve a consistent identity across each of their listings profiles. This includes ensuring your name, address and phone details (NAP details) are up-to-date and match across each of your chosen directories. As with social media, only choose the right directories for your business, and ensure they're credible and are visited by your target audience.

Google My Business and Bing Places are both reputable sites that would make a good starting point in terms of listing your business online. Each have their own criteria on what you need to include in your profile, but they act similarly in helping your business show in relevant local searches.

Using Guest Blogging for Off-Page SEO

Guest blogging (or guest posting) involves writing blog posts or articles that are published on another business's site or another person's blog.

Guest blogging can be useful for a number of reasons, mainly because it builds relationships, trust, exposure and links. The practice of guest blogging is becoming increasingly common, most likely because it's a helpful and more ethical way to provide your site with more authority and backlinks.

If you're considering guest blogging as a method of off-page SEO, there are several factors to think about:

- What's your goal?
- Who are you going to guest blog for?
- How are you going to pitch your guest post?
- How are you going to write your post?
- How are you going to track responses?

Each of these questions need to be answered in order to create the best opportunities for guest blogging. Extensive research should be conducted in order to discover which blogging sites would be best to pitch a guest post idea to, and to understand the topics and structures of posts that should be considered.

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Bookmarking

Bookmarking goes much further than someone saving a page to their browser. Whilst this does count and can be useful for off-page SEO purposes, social bookmarking is another method of saving webpages but using social media to do so, such as sending links to friends, family, and/or colleagues.

The more people that bookmark your page, the better, and for several reasons:

- **Indexing**
  Bookmarking and social bookmarking is another way for search engine bots to crawl and understand the page being shared and its content, helping to speed up the indexing process. Search engines are more likely to rank your website faster if a high number of bookmarks have been made, compared to if you had no bookmarks.

- **Backlinks**
  Every time a page of your website is shared on a bookmarking site, it creates another backlink, and these are considered high-quality back-links. These links saved and shared help increase your website's domain authority, leading to a better ranking for relevant keywords.

- **Traffic**
  Specific social bookmarking sites such as Pinterest, can greatly impact traffic to your website in a way a browser bookmark can't (as long as your content is engaging enough).

- **Social Signals**
  Search engines often count bookmarks as social signals, to help them understand how popular your brand is. The more popular your brand, the higher you're likely to rank.

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Measuring the success of off-page SEO

When you begin creating your off-page SEO strategy, one of the first things you need to do is think about the goals you want to achieve, as this will help you measure the success of your strategy. Consider why you want to carry-out off-page SEO to help you out when thinking of these goals. Is it solely to do with ranking? (This could be a dangerous game if that's your only purpose, since it's better to write content for audiences rather than search engines), or do you want more traffic to your website? Or are you only planning off-page SEO for specific pages, if the aim is to increase conversions? Measuring the success of your off-page SEO activities will only work if you have goals to measure against.

Useful Metrics to Help You Measure Off-Page SEO Success
There are a number of useful metrics you can use to help you measure off-page SEO success. Some of which can be used for both off-page and on-page SEO methods. Depending on your goals, some may be more relevant than others:

- Website traffic
- Social engagements
- Link clicks
- Conversions
- Domain and page authority
- Quantity of links

Some, if not all, of these measurement factors should help towards understanding where you are in achieving your aims. However, please note that it can take up to 6 months for Google and other search engines to index your website, so it may be best to measure the success of your tactics a year after you've implemented them.

Website Traffic
Website traffic simply refers to the number of people that visit your site. Analytics tools such as Google Analytics (which is free!) can help you understand the number of people that visit a specific page daily, monthly, yearly, and more! If you compare the traffic that visited your website prior to conducting off-page SEO activities with the traffic after these activities, there should be a positive difference.

Social Engagements

Social engagements involve the number of people that are interacting with you posts on social media, or with your guest blogs (if you decided to create them). In terms of where to find these metrics, each social media site you own a page for, should have these analytics housed for you. In terms of the guest blogs, the website you blogged for should offer you the data after a month or so, or whenever you ask for it (this is something you should confirm before offering a blog post though).

Link Clicks

As well as offering you data about your website's traffic, Goole Analytics and other sites can also offer information regarding which link people have clicked to lead to you website. This includes whether it was an advert, or a link from social media, or an organic link through a search. Understanding the most popular ways people have landed on your website will give you an indication of the types of areas you might want to consider including future backlinks to. For example if you've received the majority of click-through's from your guest blog, you may want to consider writing another one for a similar site.

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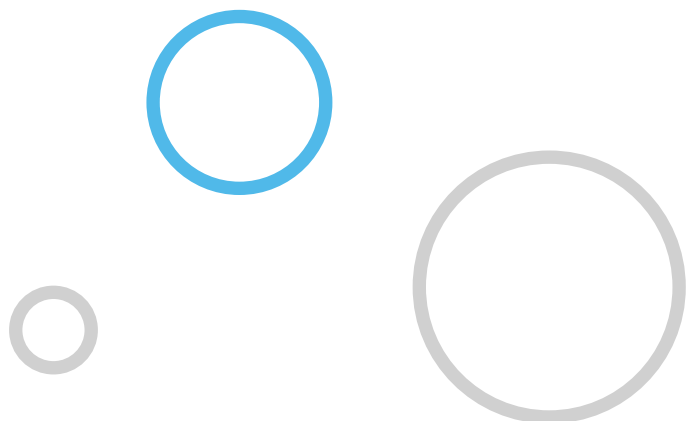
Conversions

If you've decided to conduct off-page SEO tactics for a specific page in the hopes of getting potential customers to download a piece of content or request a call back, then the number of conversions you've received is probably a good indicator of how well our off-page SEO tactics have worked. If conversions have increased since implementing off-page SEO, then chances are it's working.

Domain and Page Authority

Your domain and page authority should increase if your off-page SEO activities have been successful. If these numbers have increased somewhat substantially, then the likelihood is your website has moved up in its ranking. You should also compare these numbers with your competitors before and after conducting off-site SEO, but it may be a case that they've upped their game too.

Quantity of Links

The number of links that point to your website will give an indication of how well your website is likely to rank. Whilst the more backlinks the better, this is only the case if those links are high-quality from authoritative and trustworthy sites themselves. It's important to review these backlinks every so often to ensure they're still featured on active and trusting websites.

If you're not seeing a positive difference from any of the metrics above, then there may be an issue, this can include too many low-quality or forced backlinks, having too few backlinks, or you're simply being out-marketed by your competition. Everything can be adapted though, which is one of the reasons to measure how well your off-page SEO is doing, as it gives you the chance to regroup and refresh.

If you'd like to find out more about SEO or would like to find out how LOCALiQ can help get you started on your SEO journey, visit us at __LOCALiQ.co.uk__

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Like this guide?

We've worked with local businesses across the country to help them pivot their marketing and messaging to continue serving their communities. While SEO is a lengthy process, when done correctly, it can provide huge benefits to businesses looking to improve their online visibility.

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So, are you ready to get started?

LOCALiQ provides local businesses the way to build their presence, drive leads & awareness, manage leads and customers, and know what marketing investments work.

Connect with us today to kick start your local marketing.

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