



The 10 secrets of beating your competitors on Google



The *proven* search marketing experts

Introduction

Imagine your website ranking above your competitors' for the exact search terms that turn your traffic into revenue.

Here at dotSEO, we know a thing or two about keeping websites at number one on Google.

That's why our proven techniques keep our sister company - dotMailer - at number one on Google for the fiercely competitive phrase 'email marketing'.

We don't believe in shrouds of mystery or technical jargon when it comes to our proven SEO approach, which is why we've released our essential guide '[The 10 secrets of beating your competitors on Google](#)'.

Here we reveal in black and white the key secrets you need to know so you can use natural search to drive hoards of quality visitors to your site, and convert them to sales.

Whether your firm is brand new to SEO, or long established on page one of Google, we recommend you give this report to anyone in your team responsible for your marketing, sales or website.

The 10 secrets of beating your competitors on Google

1 - Do your competitor research

In order to beat your competitors on Google, your first essential step is to do your competitor research.

Define your market and identify specifically your key competitors in that marketplace. Then go online and benchmark your website against your competitors' sites, to understand where your site is strong and where it is weaker.

Research and monitor your competitors' activities on Google - both in natural and paid search - and learn from your findings.

Detailed and systematic competitor research will deliver you two important wins:

- ✓ Realistic and meaningful targets to work to.
- ✓ Powerful insights into the opportunities and threats you need to focus your SEO strategy on.

2 - Do your keyword research

Don't begin to allocate budget for site optimisation until you know which are the critical keywords for which you should optimise.

One of the most common mistakes made by companies undertaking SEO is to skip or skimp on this research stage, because they believe they already know how their market behaves.

Don't try to assume or guess which search words or phrases your most convertible visitors use to get to your site. Surprisingly often, you'll find it's the keywords that you never thought of that can generate the most conversions.

3 - Power up your page titles

Your page titles are one of the most powerful weapons in your on-site SEO armoury.

Follow these rules for the use of keywords in your website page titles – and most importantly of all, your homepage title:

- ✓ Make sure you begin your page title with your target keyword, not with your company name.
- ✓ Remember, it's not who you are but what you offer that Google needs to see in the page title. You can use your description to reassure visitors with your brand name (see Secret No. 4).
- ✓ Don't forget, Google listings only display 66 characters (including spaces) for a page title, so efficient use of this limited space is crucial.

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4 - Advertise your meta description

Your meta description is a short paragraph of text that describes your site. It resides within the page code and is only visible to search engines.

However, Google often displays this paragraph on its search results page, under the page title text.

Your website's description has one key purpose: to drive click-throughs from the search engine results page to your website. Think of it as your advertisement.

Your meta description should:

- ✓ Provide a clear and concise summary of your website and clearly communicate what a visitor to your site can expect to find
- ✓ Compel the searcher to click through to your website (without being gimmicky)
- ✓ Not sacrifice click-throughs for keywords

Any keywords you include in your meta description should match those in your page title and the content of your homepage.

Remember, Google descriptions only allow for 150 characters including spaces, so don't make the common mistake of forcing Google to truncate your description, cutting it off in mid-sentence.

5 - Be a headline writer!

Headings are important for breaking up content on your website and to make it more scannable and digestible for your visitors.

Both main headings and subheadings are also important for SEO. Google uses headings to better understand the make-up and relevance of your content.

Make sure each page on your website has a main heading and a series of subheadings, and that each of these headings includes your target keywords.

6 - Optimise your file names for search engines

Wherever possible, you should save your images, media and web pages by using your keywords in the file names themselves.

For example, if your keyword phrase is "computer screens" you'll want to save the images used on that page as 'computer-screens-01.jpg' or 'computer_screens_01.jpg' (either will work).

This helps search engines better understand what particular files contain.

Even more important is your web page's filename since many search engines now allow users to query using "inurl:" searches.

Your filename for the computer screens page could be 'computer-screens.html' or 'computer_screens.html'.

Don't overlook the optimisation of the ALT attribute or titles of the images on your site. These should be descriptive, for example:

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7 - Put your site on the map

A visitor sitemap is a web page that holds links to all the pages on your website, in a directory format.

Sitemaps can provide a valuable secondary or tertiary navigation aid for website visitors.

Crucially, a sitemap can also be valuable for search engine optimisation.

Sitemaps are a great way to help search engines find their way round your website more easily and increase the chances of all your pages being indexed.

Follow these best practice rules when creating a sitemap:

- ✓ Sitemaps should be indented in a way that reflects the hierarchy of the site, and all headings should be linked to the relevant page
- ✓ The page name information in the sitemap should be in text, not images
- ✓ No two pages on a sitemap should have the same name as this can confuse both users and search engines
- ✓ Expandable and collapsible sitemaps could affect the accessibility of a site, so use with caution

Top tip - get a Search Engine Sitemap

There is a sitemap specifically designed to provide search engines with the very latest updates on a site. This is called an XML sitemap, or sitemap.xml.

Make sure you have an XML sitemap in place and, where possible, ensure it is automatically updated by a CMS (content management system).

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8 - Control search engine access with a Robots.txt file

A Robots.txt file is used to tell search engines where they can and can't go on your site. This is important because you don't necessarily want search engines accessing *all* the content you have published.

For example, there may be archives, whitepapers or other out of date pages that for whatever reason are better off not being included in your search results and could adversely affect your click throughs and conversions.

9 - Describe your image links and text links

When you place links (both to internal and external web pages) on your website, make sure you provide search engines with a description of that link. Google likes to understand the relevance of a link and give it a link score.

For example, when you place a link on an image - such as a button or graphical banner on your website - make sure you name the link with a title, like this:

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<a href="http://www.hotvillas.com/" title="holiday villas">www.hotvillas.com</a>.
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When you're hyperlinking words on your website pages, make sure you use the words themselves as the link description.

Here for example, the phrase 'holiday villas' is the link itself. This is known as 'anchor text' and is the very best way of describing to search engines what your links are about.

Don't forget to use anchor text that targets the keywords for which you are optimising your website.

10 - Write and propagate relevant content

One-way links that point from relevant, websites with high Page Ranks to your website are crucial for your Google rankings.

Article marketing is an effective way of building a network of one-way links. Write up regular articles of about 500 words, relevant to the content of your site, and submit these to various article sites. Once these sites publish your article, you are entitled to one or two links to your own website, in the author bio section.

So if you publish 100 articles, that gives you 200 new inbound links.

Press releases are another way you can gain links. The difference here is that you don't have any control over the actual link that is published. This is usually controlled by the publisher who may not include a link at all. However, unlike article marketing, a press release can also drive significant and valuable traffic to your site, since press releases often gain exposure in news searches like Google News and Yahoo News.

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About dotSEO

dotSEO is a specialist search marketing agency dedicated to helping businesses and organisations to grow, using natural search.

Our proven approach will maximise your ROI on natural search

At dotSEO, we take a different approach to search marketing than most SEO agencies you'll find. Our focus is on using ethical and sustainable SEO to deliver outstanding ROI from your budget.

We don't shroud our methods and techniques in mystery. We tell you exactly what we're going to do, and we do it - enabling you to make much more money from your search marketing.

Tailored solutions, to fit your individual challenges

We know that every business is different, with its own unique challenges and opportunities. So what we don't do is to follow 'SEO-by-numbers'.

Instead, we'll get right under the skin of your business and put together a tailored package designed to transform the returns you get from your search budget and your website.

Our clients

dotSEO is part of the dotDigital Group plc – one of the UK's largest and most successful, full-service digital marketing agencies, whose clients include some of the country's best known consumer and B2B brands.



Some of the dotDigitalgroup's clients

Our core services

- ✓ Keyword analysis
- ✓ On-page SEO
- ✓ Off-page SEO
- ✓ Social media marketing
- ✓ Copywriting services (PR and article writing)
- ✓ Website design and CMS
- ✓ PPC Management
- ✓ Local search/Google maps listing

About dotSEO

Interested?

Get in touch for more details and pricing.

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