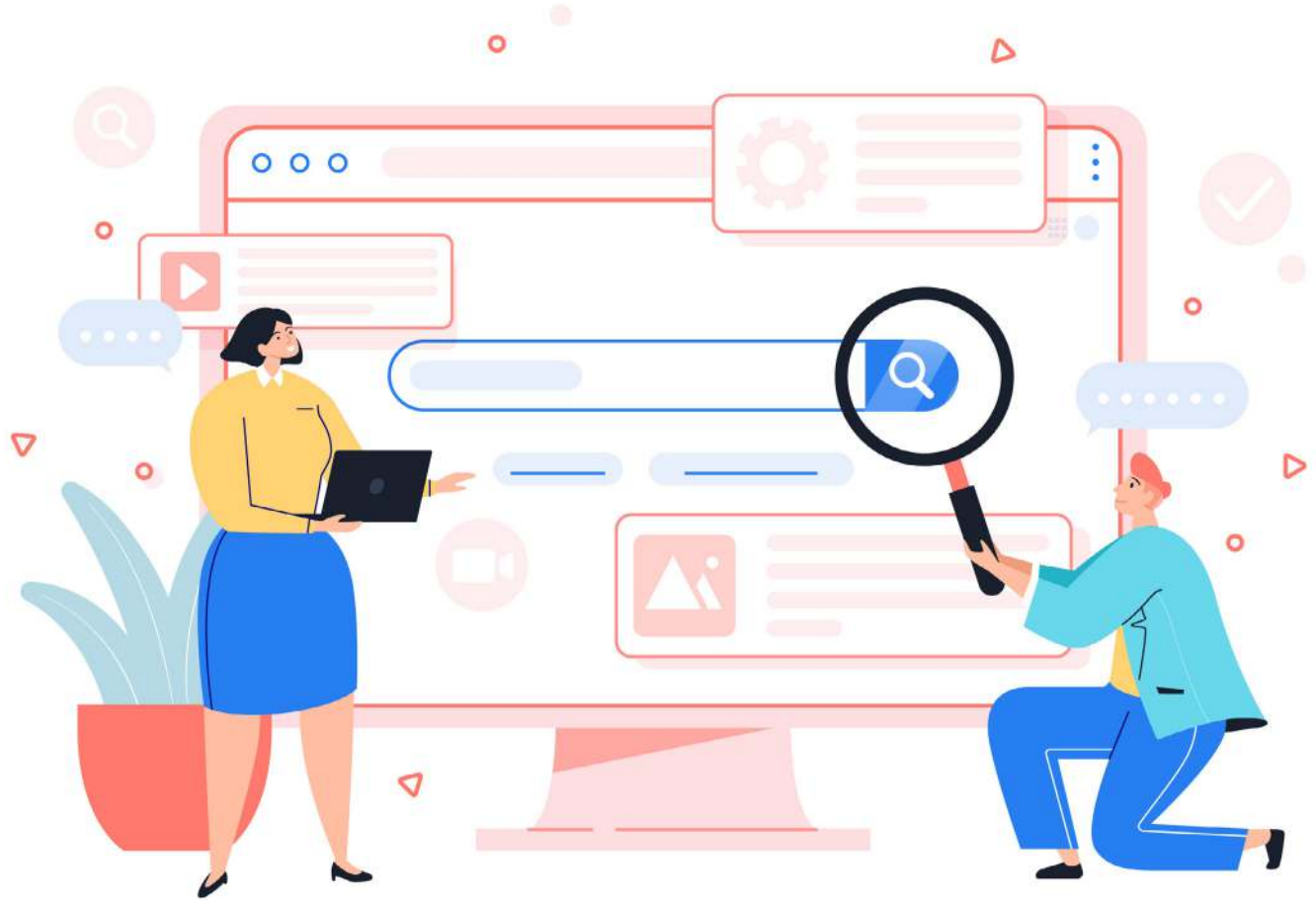# Your SEO Guide

INVANITY

What's Included?

What is SEO?

On-Page vs Off-Page

SEO Planning

SEO Sin City

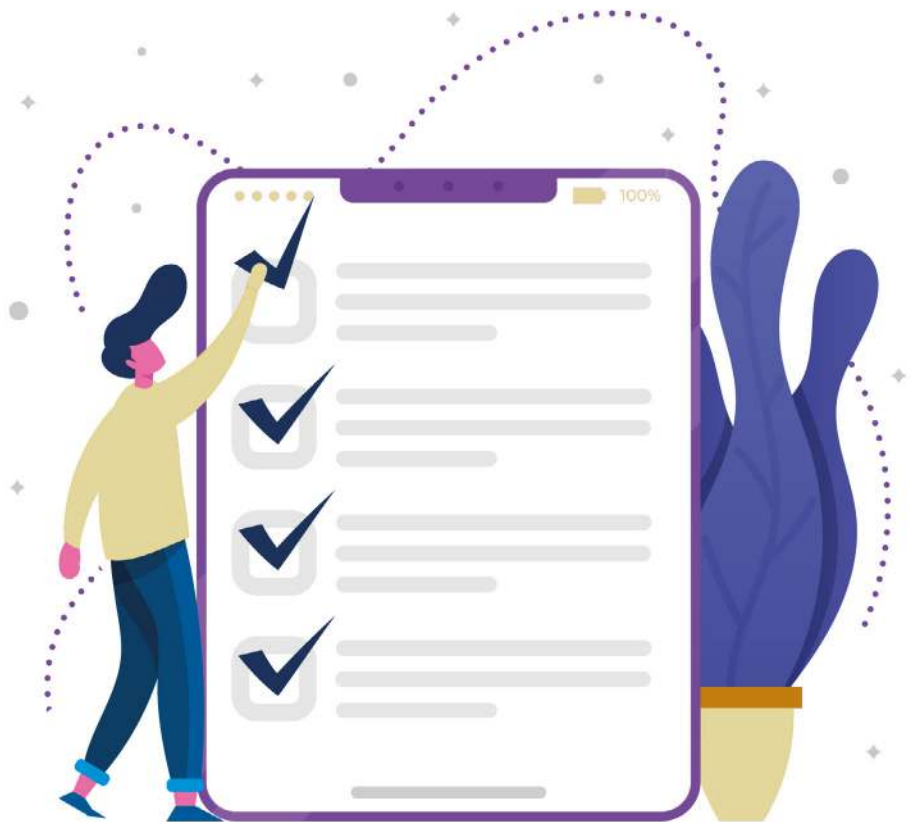Content

HTML

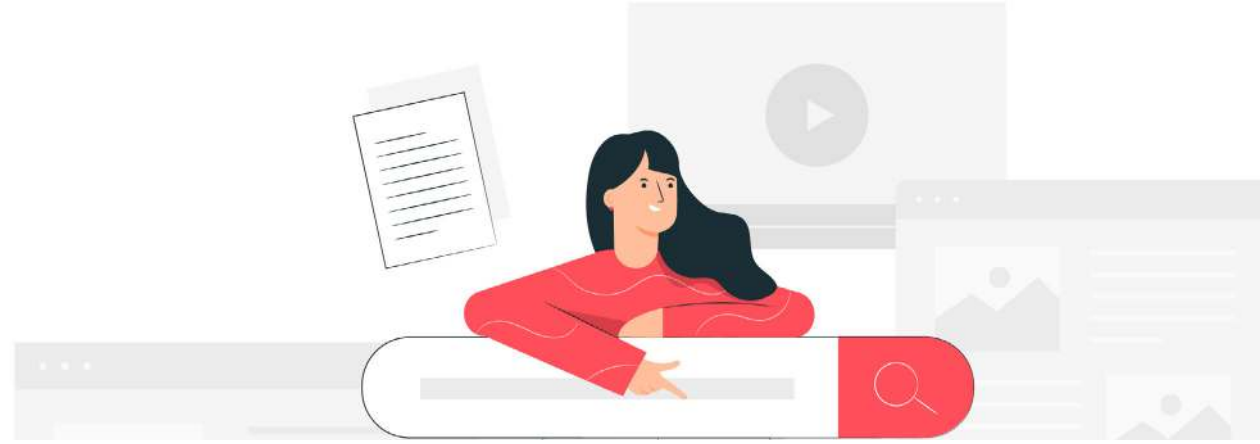Architecture

User

Links

Trust

What is SEO?

& WHY IS IT IMPORTANT

In its simplest form, SEO is the art of increasing a business's online visibility within search engines such as Google, Yahoo and Bing. When we talk about visibility, we mean how high your website pages rank for a specific keyword or search query within Google and the total number of ranking pages your site has for searches relating to the products and services your business provides. In both cases, the higher you rank the better.

With over 62% of all click-throughs from search engines taking place on one of the first three results, the benefits of ranking highly are clear. If your business can in the top 3 results on Google for a keyword/phrase that gets a lot of searches and is relevant to your products and services- you will get a huge influx of visitors to your website. Paired with an effective website and good messaging this will, without doubt, increase the amount of online enquires and sales you are getting!

A recent survey from HubSpot Research found that 77% of people research a brand/business online before engaging with it.

A graph to show the relationship between search engine ranking and website traffic
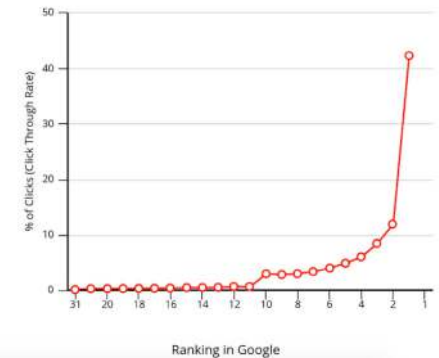
Invanity Marketing, 2019

Learn more about the value of SEO

On-Page vs Off-Page

When we talk about SEO, there are 2 top level categories that we can use to separate the elements that affect your search engine ranking - on page and off page.

Although the name might suggest it relates to anything 'on the page(s)' of your website, this isn't entirely true. Whilst it does focus on what people see on your website, it also focuses on elements that can't be seen by users on the page. These elements include HTML, user experiences and the layout/architecture of your site. While these aren't specifically seen by users, they are seen by search engines which is why they are included in the on-page category.

On the other hand, all off-page factors are outside your website. These include backlinks, reviews, and domain authority. Even though these elements are not in the remit of your site, you can still influence them to improve your search engine ranking.

In order to deploy a successful SEO strategy, you need to optimise both on and off page factors. At times, the 2 categories will support one another i.e. strong content (on-page) can lead to better engagement which improves your trustworthiness (off-page) in the eyes of search engines.
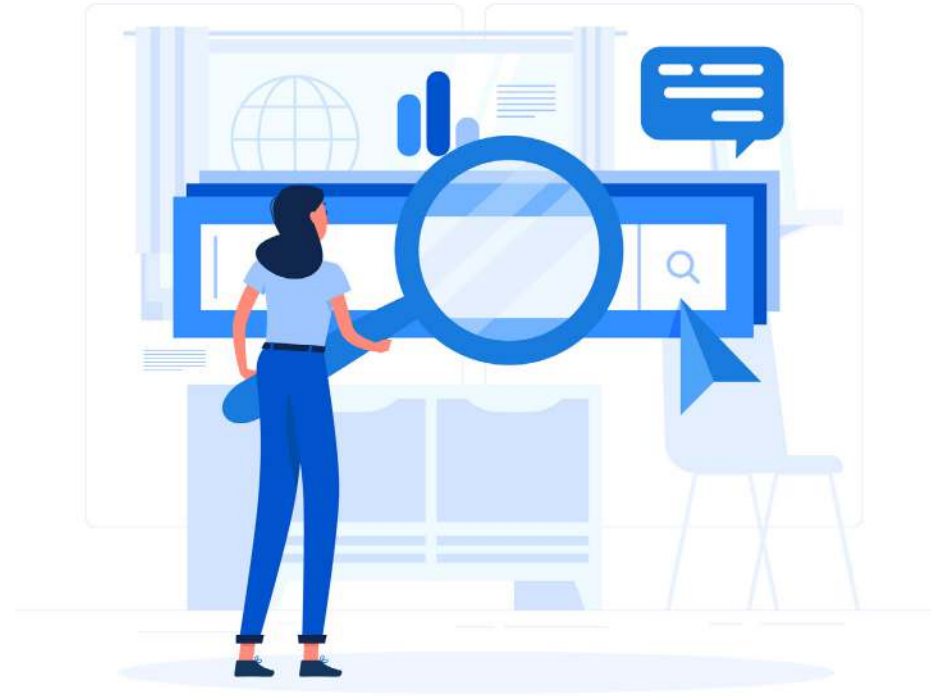
SEO Planning

A key factor in all successful SEO strategies is effective planning which develops strong foundations. By this we mean that the required planning, research and understanding of your target market and what they research online has been completed and you have sufficient insights in which to develop your SEO plan.

The aim of SEO is to rank on SERPs for keywords and phrases that your target market search for. In order to do this successfully, you need to know who your target market is and what they'll be searching for online.

A proven and commonly used tactic is to create a persona of your audience which a semi-fictional representative of your ideal customer. Once you characterise who you want to find your business, you can start answering questions about what their needs are, what problems they have that you could solve, what questions they ask that you could answer and most importantly, what keywords and phrases you should be adding to your keyword basket.
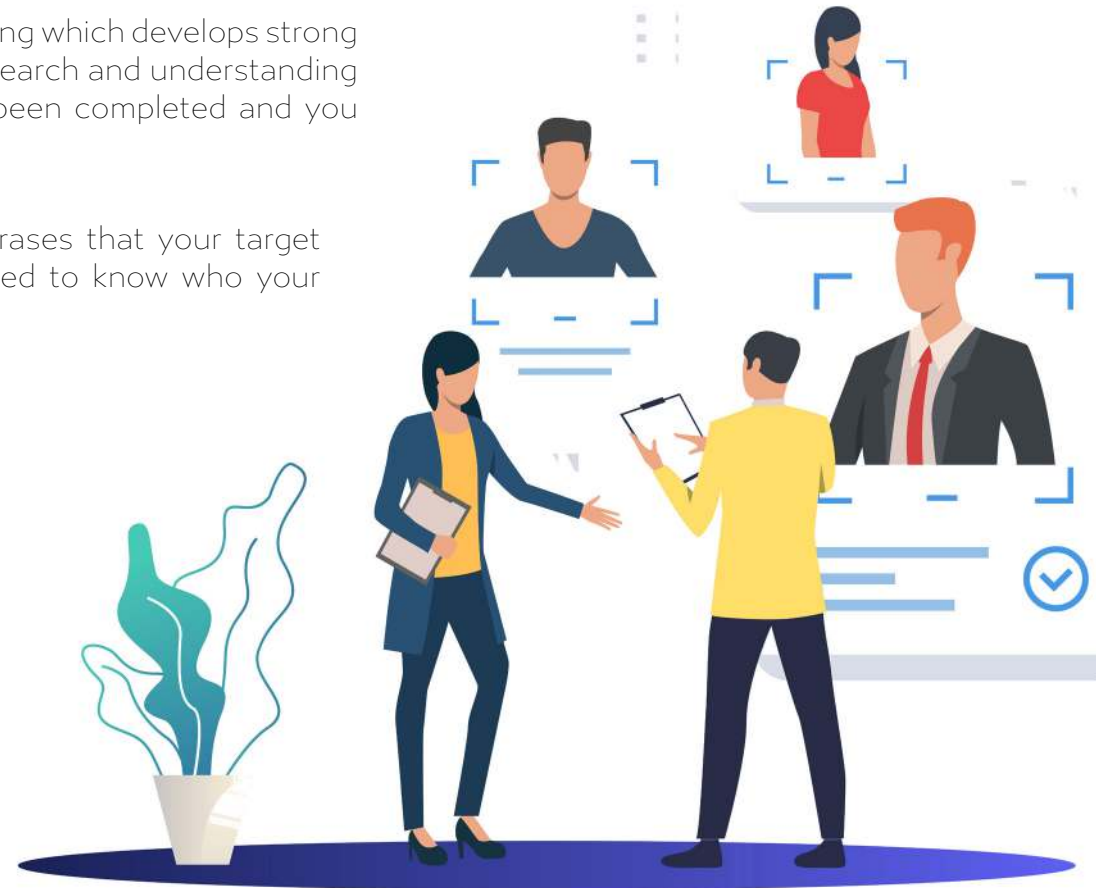
SEO Sin City

Before we jump into the components of a successful SEO campaign, let's first clear out the sins of SEO by highlight the three key tactics that should never be used. Deploying any of these tactics will likely damage your SEO campaign and website rankings and may even get you blacklisted online.

Cloaking

Cloaking is an SEO tactic in which HTML code is added to a website to show a search engine crawler different content to the users. This allows sites to fool search engines into thinking the on- page content is strong and contains relevant keywords, when in fact it does not. This illegal practice can result in your web page being removed from search engine indexes and therefore makes you invisible online.

Stuffing

Keyword stuffing involves including a keyword, or set of keywords, too many times on a single page. Although not always intentional, search engines see this stuffing of keywords as a ploy to improve the ranking position of your web pages. If search engines identify this tactic on a site, they will downgrade its ranking position.

Invanity have discovered that it's best to use a keyword 22 times per website page which includes its usage in the header, meta description and alt tags.

Hiding

"Hiding" involves including a keyword many times within a page but with the text set in the same colour as the background. This makes them invisible but search engines would still notice them and rank your page higher because of it. These days search engines treat this tactic in the same way as they treat stuffing.

On Page

On-Page:

Content

In the current world of SEO, content is king. Without constant production of impactful content on your website, it will be very difficult to deploy a successful SEO strategy. The importance of content began back in 2011 when Google released their Panda algorithm update. This update penalises shallow and low-quality content and rewards in-depth, quality content that is kept fresh.

A great starting point is to focus on 4 key contributing factors to your content: quality, keywords, freshness and answers. Your content should be interesting and meaningful, and you should aim to evoke an emotional connection, such as humour, happiness or awareness. Within this, you should include the keywords for which you are aiming to rank highly.

Freshness is vital because search engines rank sites more highly when they are updated frequently. Content that is informative and provides answers to questions will be recognised and consequently achieve better visibility. A great tool to help with this is AnswerThePublic, a website which shows questions that people type into search engines and enables you to plan your content accordingly.

Discover More About The Importance of Content

Quality
Well written and engaging content is a must.

Keywords
Ensure your content gets found in SERPs.

Freshness
Websites with regularly updated content win.

Answers
Content with answers are preferred by search engines.

On-Page:

HTML

At this point you may be wondering how search engines 'see' what is in your website and understand what the content is. Well, it's the HTML code. HTML is made up of 'tags', which are bits of code that tell search engines how to 'read' your content. Including specific SEO tags within the HTML code of your website significantly increases the online visibility of your business.

There are a range of tags that search engines look for and for each tag there are criteria you need to meet to please the search engine.

Ultimately, successfully deployed HTML tags for SEO will have a hugely positive impact on how your website performs online, and without them you're unlikely to reach your audience.

Click the below button to discover how to integrate these HTML elements most effectively and where they are essential.

Get Started with HTML

Titles

Titles should contain your keywords to boost search engine ranking.

Headings

Prioritise on page content with H1, H2 and H3 tags, using keywords in each.

Descriptions

Tell users and search engines what each page is about using keywords.

AMP

This page format by Google provides speed and performance.

HTML5

Architecture

Your website's architecture, the way it's built, your sitemap, the URL structure that you use and a range of other relevant factors such as page load speed, security and crawlability all contribute toward telling search engines what your website is about and the kind of experience a user will receive when on your website. A strong architecture not only helps search engines but will also improve the usability for potential customers, increasing the likelihood that they will convert to real customers.

The single most important factor here though is crawlability. If search engines cannot crawl and index your pages, you've essentially got 0% chance of appearing in SERPs. In Google's case this involves submitting your sitemap into Google Search Console where they will index your site and highlight any potential crawler issues.
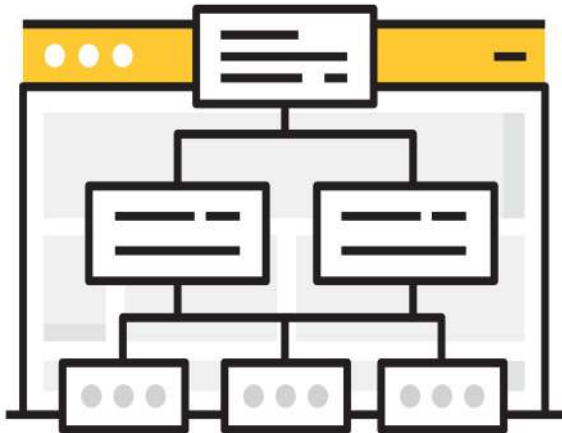
Growing in importance is how well your site is built for mobile. Since early 2015, Google realised that most searches took place on a mobile device rather than desktop, and year-by-year search engines increase the priority placed on a strong mobile site.

Nearly 60% of all Google searches currently take place on mobile and this is only ever going to increase.

Crawl

In order to rank, search engines must be able to crawl your pages.

Speed

Your site should load in less than 3 seconds for a strong user experience.

HTTPS

An SSL certificate provides users a secure network, reduces spam and is appreciated by Google.

Mobile

Most people visit website on their mobile, your website should be mobile-first.

On-Page:

User

Experience

Engaging design and simple navigation will increase time on page and reduce bounces.

Intent

Designing your site to match how users intend to use it boosts engagment.

Country

Producing country specific content will help improve rankings globally.

When formulating an SEO strategy and thinking about how you'll update your website to rank more highly, you can often overlook one key component - the user! The way users navigate and engage with your website, known as User Experience (UX), is very important for SEO. An example of a good user experience would be a user landing on your website, clicking through to other pages and downloading a resource. Google can track this user behaviour and it feeds back positively to its ranking algorithms. A bad experience would be a user landing on your site and clicking 'back' right away because the page was either poorly designed and/or didn't have compelling content.


Another user specific factor that impacts SEO is 'locale' which can either be country specific or more local such as a town or city. If your business is multinational, you should ensure your website is available in multiple languages. On the other hand, if you're a local business, it's important that you optimise your 'Google My Business' account to tell users of your location and the cities you serve. Localised Landing pages are a really effective way to rank within the local area!

How localised landing pages improve your Google ranking

How to Optimise for Google My Business

Off Page

Off-Page:
Links
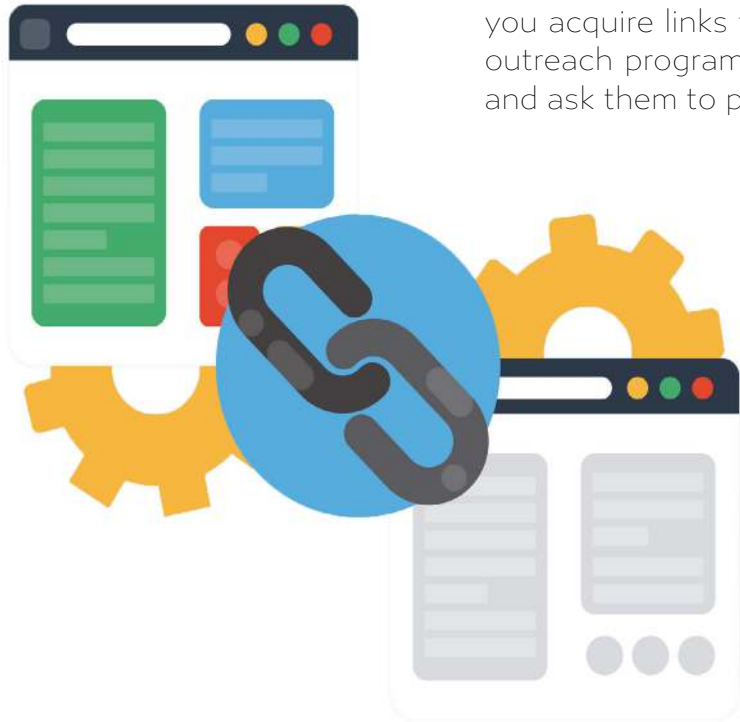
Of all the components that contribute to successful SEO, link building has been around for the longest (since 2000) and it remains as important as ever. Link building is a process in which you acquire links from other websites to your own. It can often involve what is known as an outreach program, where you directly contact other websites and bloggers in your industry and ask them to promote your site by linking to it from theirs.

Any old link won't do however, and it's important to focus on building high quality, relevant links that are suitable for your website and its content. Links are considered as high quality if they come from trustworthy sources who have a high domain authority. Securing high quality links will have a significant impact on the success of your SEO strategy but the opposite is true for poor quality links which can have a negative effect on your rankings.

Learn more about Domain Authority and backlinks

Off-Page:

Trust

Authority

Link-building, shares and other signals give your site authority in search.

Engagement

The longer people spend on your page the better for your search ranking.

Reputation

A great experience over a long period of time gains a strong reputation.

In your everyday life there's one characteristic you'll look for when deciding whether information is truly valuable - trustworthiness. If you can't trust the source of the information, you can't trust the information. Simple. And the same applies to the world of SEO.

There's an enormous amount of content out there on the internet and it can often be difficult to understand what is and isn't 'fake news', but search engines do their best to help us out by applying some measurable metrics to websites. These metrics are authority, engagement and reputation and they all contribute to telling search engines such as Google whether a website can be trusted.

You can gain strong authority through link building, which we discussed earlier, and through user engagement. If users spend a suitable amount of time on your site and interact with the elements within in, search engines see your site as containing valuable information. Finally, if you build and maintain strong links and enjoy high levels of engagement over a long period of time, you'll build a great reputation!

This also relates to how genuine you are with your SEO efforts and how much time and effort you put into your website. In essence, if you show Google that you care and you are doing things in the correct way, whist putting your website visitors and their search queries first, then they will reward you by ranking your website higher.

SEO can grow your business

& we can help

enquiries@invanity.co.uk

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