

## WHY SEO IS YOUR FRENEMY

Search engines like Google and Bing often change the algorithms by which they rank search results. But online retailers should pay the most attention to the key principles that have withstood the test of time.

### Keep the SEO Pure

Search engines have grown sophisticated in their ability to detect black hat gimmicks and will actually penalize your natural SEO should you participate in these types of practices. Shoppers have caught on to these shady SEO practices too. Misleading customers into visiting a site will cost more than it ever earns.

### Content Is Key

If a term appears more frequently in a site's content, the search engine will consider the site a more valid and relevant source. Search engines have also started to place a greater priority on the content that web visitors actually see in their web browser as opposed to a site's invisible content, such as meta tags and meta keywords.

### Coding Still Matters

Meta tags and keywords may have lost some of their clout, but site coding remains integral to a search engine's ability to identify relevant content on your site. Properly coding elements such as audio, video, images and scripts will help the search engine identify the relevant content on your site with greater ease.

### Structuring a Successful Ecommerce Site

Canonical tags have now emerged as an important structural element for ecommerce entrepreneurs. Inserted into the header of a page's HTML code, a canonical tag directs web crawlers to the page it should index, instead of the duplicates. Utilizing these tags can help a site to avoid slipping in the search rankings.

### SEO Is Social

A blog provides a great forum for relaying key industry and product information, but it also provides an even greater opportunity for increasing the frequency of key



search terms for your website. Publishing blog content through social media with the inclusion of appropriate site links will also help bolster visibility in search results. The major search engines have started to pay more attention to “shares and mentions on social media,” according to Entrepreneur.

### Stay Speedy Across All Devices

In 2013, Google released new guidelines for mobile search rankings. The research indicated an average loading time of seven seconds for sites on a mobile device, an abysmal statistic when we also know that a load time exceeding one second will disrupt the user's flow. For ecommerce sites, that difference in seconds can mean the difference in sales.

*Murtaza “Zeke” Hamdani*

## THREE TOP WHITE HAT SEO TECHNIQUES

White hat SEO conforms to the guidelines laid out by search engines and, unlike black hat SEO, does not involve trickery. Internet marketing firm Cyberset says retailers should be aware of these three top white hat SEO techniques:



### Titles and Metas

Meta description and meta keyword elements have been so misused in the past that search engines may now regard them as less important. But it's still vital to use them and use them properly. Titles also still carry a lot of weight. The title of anything is a declaration as to what the content might be, so make sure your page titles are a true representation of the content of the page.

### Keyword Research and Effective Keyword Use

Single words are not always the most effective target. Multiword phrases that are much more specific to a product help to target end users that are much more likely to want what the merchant is offering. The keywords should be used throughout all

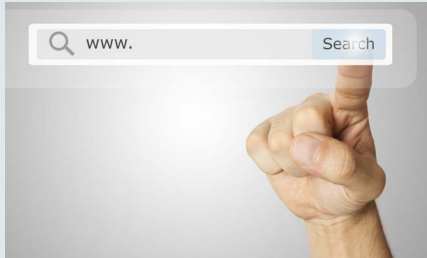
the important elements, such as title, meta description, meta keywords, heading elements, alt tag, title tag and links.

### Use Semantic Mark Up

Semantically structuring your markup helps search engines understand the content of your web page. Making proper use of heading elements is essential because search engines give more weight to the content within the heading elements. Using cascading style sheets to separate the design elements from the content makes for much leaner code and makes it easier for search engines to find what they're looking for, which is content.

*TP*

## 4 STRATEGIES TO BOOST SEO RANK USING SOCIAL SIGNALS



**S**amir Palnitkar, president of ShopSocially, and Tim Ahlenius, senior digital strategist at Americaneagle.com, presented a webinar in July showcasing strategies to boost SEO rank using social signals.

Palnitkar and Ahlenius said retailers could unlock the latent power of social to drive SEO rank of their website by employing these four strategies.

### Increase Content Sharability via Onsite Social Apps

Google's official blog says that sharing is an important factor affecting the SEO

rank. To improve the SEO rank, marketers should embed onsite social apps on their site to drive higher sharing.

To drive shares on social media channels like Facebook, Twitter and Instagram, the best strategy marketers can adopt is C2C. Besides creating valuable social testimonials, social recommendations also bring quality social traffic back to a retailer's website. Retailers can convert customer delight on order completion into SEO boost for their sites.

### Optimize Shared Content for Maximum SEO Benefit

Besides optimizing the title, description and image for SEO purposes, marketers can also influence the shared blurb by asking a leading question in the sharing interface. Google Authorship is an important tool for content marketers to leverage. It shows the author's Google Plus profile in the search results, thus increasing the credibility and click-through rate.

### Social UGC for SEO Benefit

A hashtag in social SEO is equivalent to a keyword in content SEO. It defines the intent of the user and increases the searchability of the brand on social media. Marketers can aggregate these social testimonials and curate these precious social referrals into one page. Getting customers to add your brand hashtag enhances your brand's overall digital presence and boosts the SEO rank of your website.

### Social UGC as Social Proof on Site

Social user-generated content acts as excellent social proof on a website. Real-time social buzz by real people with their true social profiles increases the user engagement on site, thus increasing the page rank for the site.

*Tim Parry*



## SEO CROSSES BORDERS

**I**f you want to capitalize on cross-border sales, it's important to optimize your site for international audiences and localized search results.

### Concentrate on Individual Markets

An effective campaign in a single market can yield better returns than patchy campaigns in several. In SEO terms, setting up market-specific localized sites with country code top level domains (such as www.example.mx for Mexico or www.example.es for Spain) can give you a boost in local search results.

### Pay Special Attention to Keywords

Keywords are textremely important when it comes to SEO. If you are dealing

with foreign markets, good keyword research can be even more important.

Don't rely on dictionary translations of English language keywords, as alternative terms could be far more effective in other markets. Brainstorm alternatives with the aid of a native translator and run them all through keyword tools to see what sticks.

### Localize Content

You will also want to localize all your content, placing your keywords prominently but without spamming or overstuffing your content. Automatic translation systems offer a cheap and easy option, but they are also prone to errors and you are likely to end up with content that sounds stilted and unnatural at best. Native speaking translators can help you avoid mistakes and can help you bring

cultural references and flavor to your localized site.

### Use Titles and Headings Effectively

Keywords can also be used in your website URL and page titles. Keywords that match the actual search term typed by the user may be bolded in the search results, which can help attract the viewing human eye. Keep titles short but descriptive and make use of heading tags on all your pages.

*Christian Arno*