

THE BUSINESS BREAKDOWN

SEO Approaches for the Spa

by Kathryn Leverette, L.E.

Search engine optimization (SEO) is essentially free advertising on the biggest and most effective advertising space on the planet. It is the art and science of how to increase visibility and traffic from the unpaid, organic, and natural listings on search engines. It is also one of the most effective marketing methods for the skin care industry, especially for the professional that has, or wants to have, their own brand of products and services and wants to rank high on local searches.

The approach taken to SEO impacts a business' bottom line in a variety of ways, yet, to most small business owners, SEO is a minefield of misinformation and conflicting advice. Furthermore, the algorithms that determine a business' rank for their most relevant keywords are constantly evolving, making it difficult to stay on top of Google's changing expectations.

Research and Identify the Best Keywords

Keyword research is not dead. Instead, it is just more sophisticated and part of a much bigger picture.

Businesses want more visitors on their website, but they also want the right kind of visitors. Spa owners should consider whether their website traffic will result in income for their business or help them reach other goals. They should also consider if a keyword



works with the content on their website. If they find that website visitors are quickly finding what they are looking for and are making appointments or purchasing products, they should get started with versions of that keyword or keyword phrase.

If a spa is local, their keywords should focus on the products and services they offer at the location where they are offered to ensure that visitors are truly interested in their website. Keywords such as acne treatment, eyebrow design, and anti-aging are too general and will yield huge national search results that are so competitive that the spa will get lost. Instead, try longer, targeted keyword phrases to help search engines match online users to specific local results that are relevant to what future clients want from the spa, like acne treatment San Antonio or eyebrow waxing Silicon Valley.

Optimizing a Website for SEO

Spas need to optimize their website for SEO, including all product and service pages, based on the specific keywords and keyword phrases they will use. Their website must have a sitemap and all image descriptions, title tags, H1 tags, and meta descriptions must be

accurate and include the right keyword phrases that are relevant to each page. WordPress websites make this easy for some businesses to do themselves, but a website designer and website-hosting company can help with this task. WordPress plugins like Yoast and All-in-One SEO will help make this process easier.

If the website has several internal pages with numerous unique, descriptive, authoritative content about individual skin conditions, cosmetic ingredients, products, and services, then the spa has a lot of linkable content to other areas of their website.

Create Distinctive Content

To successfully market brands, products, and services online, spas need a number of well-written and worthwhile content. Providing current and future clients with valuable information will help build trust, credibility, and engagement. Try adding a blog as part of the website and upload current content that can be published on other websites and distributed in the form of articles, press releases, infographics, and videos.

While simple, clean website designs are popular these days, longer articles (1,200 to 1,500 words) perform better in searches. Longer content will

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also receive more social media shares as well, so write about one topic in-depth. Shortening longer articles with, “[...] Read more of this content at the following link!” will give the website two pages of views instead of one.

Keywords are organic elements of good content, but they must be relevant and be an integral part of the structure of the writing. Google will recognize similar words and phrases, so make use of synonyms. Spas should avoid keyword stuffing their articles.

Build Inbound Links

Inbound links to a website from other reputable websites are sources of high-quality traffic that will help boost visibility, authority, and search ranking. Social networking, blogging, relevant directory submissions, and reciprocal linking are powerful strategies to increase traffic.

Add linkable icons for social sharing on all pages of the spa's website.



There is a positive correlation between the amount of social signals and rankings. Social signals remain important for brand awareness and can help to drive organic traffic to the website.

Yelp – Spas should claim or create a Yelp profile so they can control the information and content. For a small fee, they can control the order of the photographs and choose the featured photographs. For an additional fee, spas can keep competing Yelp advertisements off of their page without having to advertise.

Facebook – Get local business, blog, and/or brand pages with links

back to the website. Post to these pages weekly, at the very least, with content that engages the reader.

Twitter – Twitter cards are a great tool to drive traffic to the website. These cards are larger tweets that incorporate images and allow buttons to be built into the tweet. They also allow for engaging calls to action (such as Book Now or Buy Now) and attractive images right in the stream. Spas can also give them specific functionality, like having downloads attached directly to the tweet. Tweets with images get almost 20 percent more clicks than text-only tweets.

Google+ – Spas should get a Google profile (and a Gmail address), a Google+ business page, and a Google+ brand page. Verify the business and dress up the pages with photographs, videos, and other content and post often. On all three pages, use relevant keywords and add links to various pages on the website and other profiles on

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the web. The Google profile will allow access to Google My Business, Google Maps, AdWords, Google Analytics, and Webmaster Tools.

Instagram – Instagram is a good place to post photographs to gain followers and promote new products and services. Do not bombard followers with excessive posts or they will be quick to unfollow. Adjust the settings to also post to other social media websites to save time. Use strategic

hashtags and create a unique, identifying hashtag. Add relevant hashtags like #skincare, #aesthetics, #skinpeel, #sugaring, and #acnetreatment, and include the region, city, and neighborhood (#bayarea, #sanfrancisco, and #unionsquare).

LinkedIn – Spas can complete their profile, add links to their website, secure their own company, and showcase pages. Dress up these pages and post updates often.

Videos – YouTube and Vimeo provide excellent marketing platforms for promoting the spa's brand, products, and services, and provide virtual tours of the spa. They also provide excellent opportunities for backlinks to the website and keyword phrase marketing on search engines. Vimeo Pro allows for hosting password-protected content without having it show up on the paid user's playlist.

Create and complete profiles on Foursquare, Bing, Yahoo, About.Me, Angie's List, Merchant Circle, Manta, Hot Frog, CitySearch, Local.com, MapQuest, Show Me Local, Pinterest, and other relevant local directories and keep the information current. If Yext's aggressive, over-priced Power Listing advertisements get in the way of adding or editing free profiles, consider using Express Update by Infogroup, where the spa can update multiple online profiles free of charge or faster for a low fee.

Reach out to related websites and skin care colleagues in other cities and offer to exchange links. All external links on the website should open in a separate window to keep users on the website.

Pay Attention to User Experience

Speed – Google, and visitors, prefer fast-loading websites. Check with the website designer or web host to make sure the website loads quickly.

Pop-ups – Keep annoying pop-ups off the website to help prevent bounces. The bounce rate represents the percentage of visitors who enter the website and then leave immediately.

Call-to-action – Now that the spa ranks with a top position for their relevant keywords and has sufficient web traffic, is it enough? What do visitors do once they land on the home page? Do they stay, surf around, explore, and then make an appointment or buy a product or do they leave almost immediately? More bounces equal lower rankings and bad news for the spa's bottom line. Add call-to-action buttons on every page of the website, depending on the spa's goals.

Mobile-friendly – Mobile searches have surpassed desktop searches be-

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cause most users search the Internet on the move. A responsive website design is crucial to protecting the spa's ranking, so make sure the website is optimized for all types of mobile devices right away, especially smart phones.

Switch to HTTPS

Thanks to more sophisticated hackers, the Internet is moving toward a more secure landscape. Consider moving the spa's entire website over to https (not just the store pages) and get a ranking boost from Google at the same time. A website designer and webhost can help with the IP address, SSL certifi-

cate, new sitemaps, robots.txt file, and 301 redirects to make sure everything works with https, including images, canonical tags, and widgets. Register the https version of the spa's URL in both Google and Bing Webmaster Tools.

Having a 100 percent secure website shows visitors that the website is verified and that all data sent across the website uses a secure connection.

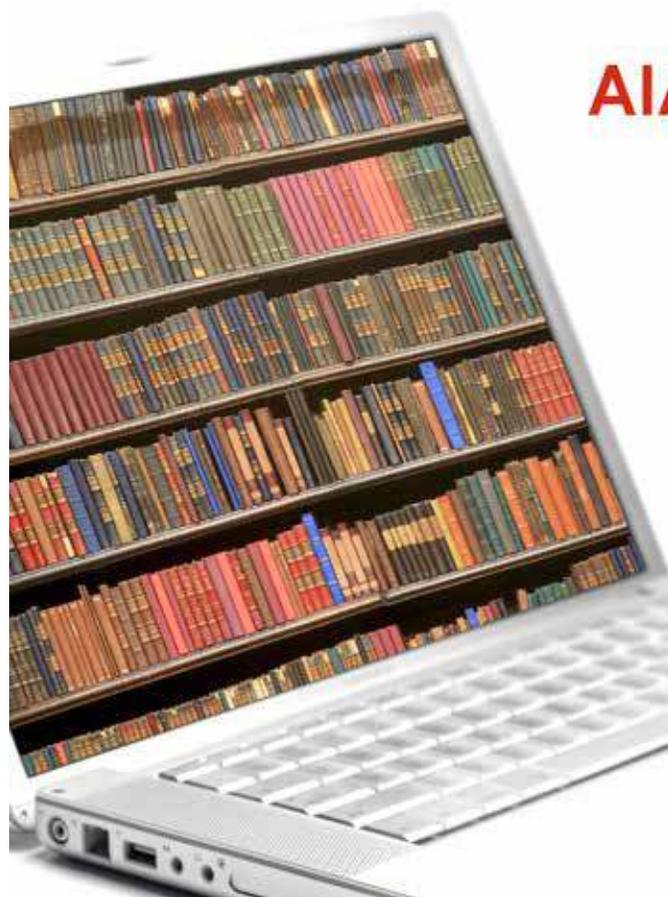
Research, Create Reports, and Analyze

Study and utilize Google's Keyword Planner, Google Analytics, and Webmaster Tools to learn, plan campaigns, track progress, uncover and fix errors, and much more. Go over reports with a website designer and make adjustments as needed. There are dozens of SEO companies who will take a business' hard-earned money and say they are doing the work without knowing or caring about the business like the owner does. Since online marketing has

become so customer-centric, no one can engage with current and future clients like the business and the business owner can. Stay on the cutting edge by learning and mastering SEO, just as professionals do with their skin care career.



Kathryn Khadija Leverette is a successful aesthetician, nationally-certified medical aesthetic specialist, business owner, freelance technical and fashion writer, keynote speaker, educator, and formulation consultant based in Oakland, Calif. Many of the protocols she developed in the late 80s and early 90s for razor bumps, hyperpigmentation, peeling, and scarring are now used widely in the skin care industry. She is an independent consultant, developing skin care products and treatment protocols, providing advanced education, and creating label copy for companies like Peter Thomas Roth Clinical Skin Care and the June Jacobs Spa Collection for over a decade.



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