Super simple
SEO for LENDING
professionals

Pipeline ROI

SEO is often regarded like the rocket science of the marketing world. Algorithms are analyzed. Experts are interrogated on the latest algorithm changes. Mere mortals have no chance at a successful SEO strategy. *Or do they?*

In this eBook, we break down the basics of SEO to prove that anyone can perform simple tactics that can improve a site's rankings over time. You'll learn how to:

- Identify your target audience

- Create content your target audience cares about

- Display your content in an easy-to-read, browsable manner

- Build inbound links safely and effectively

These strategies combined can raise your site's search rankings over time. It's important to remember that you won't jump to the number one spot for any given keyword over night. SEO strategies take time to implement, and even longer to start seeing measurable results. Stick with it, and you'll start seeing increased traffic, longer time spent on your website, and higher search engine rankings.

IDENTIFY YOUR TARGET AUDIENCE

You can't create a high-ranking website if you have no idea what kinds of visitors you want to target. Before you can execute any SEO strategies, **you have to know your target audience**. You want to know what information your potential clients need to know to help them through the borrowing process. This impacts what content you write for your website.

Do you want to work with first time buyers or older couples who are buying their third or fourth home? What's the average income and lifestyle of your borrowers? Consider things like this before you create content. You want to fill your mortgage website with the information your ideal borrowers need.
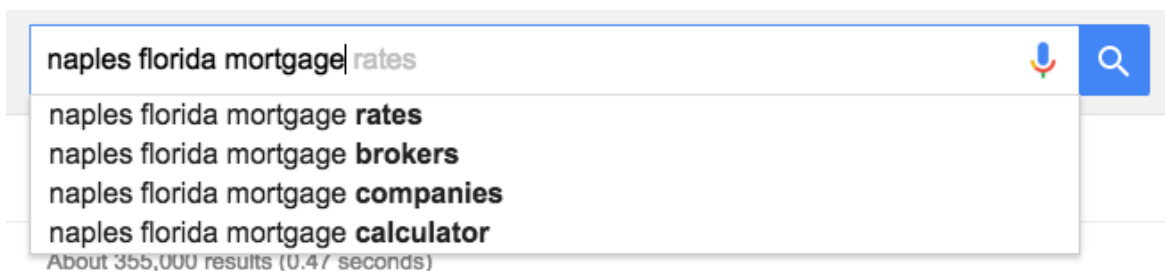
RESEARCH KEYWORDS

Keywords are the most misunderstood area of search engine optimization. There are thousands of articles that claim keywords are the most important aspect of any SEO strategy, and thousands more that claim they're outdated and irrelevant. The truth is that keywords still play a role in search engine rankings, **just a different role than they did five years ago**.

It's still important to research what terms your audience is searching for, how much competition there is for these terms, and how to create something that adds information and context to this term in an engaging manner. Here are some basic methods for conducting keyword research:

Consult Google's Autocomplete and Suggestions

Start by typing your city into Google search. You'll see a list of autocomplete terms below that give you common searches related to your city.

Click one of the phrases that comes up that may relate to your audience. Scroll to the bottom of that search results page, and you'll see a set of Google related searches. Similar to autocomplete, these keywords show terms that could potentially find a place in your keyword library for future content creation. Keep a spreadsheet or document where you list out these keyword to reference when writing website content.

Search your inbox

If you're searching for what your information your potential clients want to know, start by learning from your past clients. Search through your inbox to find questions that clients have asked you - like tax inquiries or neighborhood questions, and think of content that you can permanently add to your site that answers these questions. If one person in your target audience is asking you a particular question, that may mean several more are searching the Web for an answer.

For example, if you consistently receive e-mails about mortgage rates, you could write several content pages or blog posts on that topic:

- How mortgage rates are determined

- The differences between a 15-year fixed rate and 30-year fixed rate mortgage

- What is a rate lock?

- The cost of buying at different rates

You can also add SEO value to your content by including local information. While there are hundreds of articles online with general lending knowledge (written by high authority websites like Wells Fargo) you're able to provide a hyperlocal spin, and will be more likely to rank for important, long-tail keywords.

So what's a long-tail keyword, anyway? To quote Ian Lurie, long-tail keywords are "specific, niche search phrases, usually more than 2 words in length, that offer a low competition, low search volume and high searcher intent." While long-tail keywords have less overall traffic, there's also less competition, which means you're more likely to rank high when you target them.

CHECK YOUR WEBSITE DESIGN

Before you dive into creating content, you'll want to make sure your website design is primed to help your search rankings. If you're writing incredible, helpful content, but it's put inside of an old-school, non-mobile-responsive site, it will be harder to rank.

In early 2015, Google rolled out **a change to their search algorithm** (which decides what sites rank on what pages, for what terms) that placed a heavier weight on mobile-responsive websites. That means if your site is mobile-friendly, you're more likely to achieve high rankings. This change came about because last year, more than half of all searches on Google were performed on a mobile-device. And that number will only get bigger.

If a visitor searching on a mobile device is pointed to a non-mobile-responsive website by Google, they might not be able to read or navigate the page, and are more likely to click back to the results to find a better looking site. Google wants to provide the best experience for their mobile users, **and you want to provide the best experience for your potential customers, too**. That's why mobile-friendly design is the way to go. If you're looking into mobile-responsive mortgage website options, we'd love if you considered **one of our designs** (Plus, it comes with a **complete inbound marketing platform**.)

WRITE THE RIGHT CONTENT

Now that you've discovered who you'd like to target, and what topics you'd like to write about, it's time to create content to fill your website. There are two main kinds of content every lending site should have - permanent pages linked to from your site's navigation, and blog posts.

In modern web design, keeping your site's navigation simple is the standard. You want to prominently display your most helpful, evergreen pages (which means information that is *not* time-sensitive and will always be valuable to website visitors). This ensures that when someone visits your site from a Google search, they stay there longer because they easily find what they're looking for. The time someone spends on your website is factored into

Google's algorithm. SEO experts sometimes call this "dwell time" or "the long click".

The higher the dwell time, the more likely a visitor found your website helpful. This number, combined with overall traffic, click-through rate, and hundreds of other factors, can impact your search rankings.

The other type of content your lending website should include is an updated, hyperlocal blog. This content should take less time to produce than a new content page, be easy to update, and can include timely information. FIll your blog with long-tail content like we talked about in the Keyword Research section. For more ideas on blog post topics, check out our **great big list of lending blog post ideas**.

GAIN INBOUND LINKS

Inbound links are a key ranking factor in Google's search algorithms, because they show that others have found your content useful. However, gaining inbound links only matters if you're achieving them in a safe, valuable way. Here are some ideas:

Guest blogging

Giving away your valuable knowledge on someone else's website? Sounds crazy, but hear this tactic out. By writing for other websites (especially high-ranking ones) you're able to include contextual links to your website that can target a new audience.

But don't just sign up to write everywhere on the web. It's important to think carefully about where you choose to put your name. If your message doesn't fit with what the audience wants to read, your article won't get clicked and shared. **That doesn't help your SEO strategy at all**.

Here's a step by step strategy for publishing your first guest blog post:

1. Create a list of potential guest blogging opportunities

You want to keep a list of websites where you can contribute. These could be local news sites, lifestyle blogs, or national real estate or mortgage sites. Depending on your area of expertise and SEO goals, you can decide where your content will fit best.

2. Write out the rules and expectations for contributing to each site

While some smaller blogs may just request an e-mail about possible guest contributions, other sites may ask for a specific form to be filled out. Ignoring a site's guidelines for contributions means your request may end up in the trash.

It's also helpful to take note of what types of posts get the most engagement on each site, such as online marketing tips or home improvement guides. Some blogs also have content guidelines, like word count or number of included links. If you see that, add it to your notes as well. Here's an example of how to take notes on each website:

The Bigger Pockets Blog
http://www.biggerpockets.com/renewsblog/

Topics
- Open to articles on almost everything pertaining to real estate, but aim to focus on those topics around real estate investing. Our blog is read by people such as real estate investors, homeowners, agents, mortgage lenders, other real estate professionals, real estate press, bloggers, etc.

Guidelines
- Typically, posts can be of any length as long as they convey the message. Generally recommend 600 word minimum.
- In submitting a post to BiggerPockets, we're assuming that the post you're writing is exclusively for use on BiggerPockets. All articles are to be used once and only once. You may not reproduce the article on your own blog, newsletter, or any other websites.
- Post names frequently start with numbers

3. Write your contribution request

Approaching a site about guest blogging can be tricky. You don't want to push a pre-written article, but you also want to show your value. Most of all, you want to demonstrate that you know the site's audience and what type of content they like. Here's an example of an e-mail requesting to guest blog:

*Hey [**site owner**],*

*I'm a huge fan of your website. I loved your post [**blog post title**] and really appreciate the way you always [**valuable quality of the blog and writer**]. I'm a [**city**] mortgage lending professional, and I'm interested in contributing to your blog. I think I can really provide a unique perspective from my experience with [**area of expertise**].*

Here are a few ideas I had for a post. Let me know what you think:

- *[**List out blog post titles with brief descriptions**]*

*You can also check out some examples of my writing over on my blog, [**link to blog**]. Thanks so much for considering my request. I look forward to hearing back from you (and reading all of your awesome new content, too!)*

*Best, [**Your Name**]*

Depending on who you're writing to, the e-mail can be tweaked to be more casual or formal. While not *every* guest post request will pan out, this strategy gives you a solid shot at getting your name (and links to your website!) in front of a new audience.

Build relationships

Would you ever consider linking to another mortgage professional's blog post in one of your own? What if, in the future, they linked to a page on your site from theirs as well. In this case, building relationships with other (non-competing) industry professionals can help your site's search rankings. Massachussetts real estate agent Bill Gassett employs this strategy regularly. In fact, you've probably seen his name in an interview or one of his articles linked to on social media.

"It's not who you know, it's who you've helped." - Jeff Goins

In an **interview with him from December 2015**, Bill related his success to the relationships he's built. "I've managed to build a tribe of people who are readily willing to share my content. This has been achieved through relationship building that has taken place in sites like Google+, Twitter, and Linkedin. Without these relationships my rankings would not be where they are today."

SOCIAL SIGNALS

The importance of social media links ("social signals" in SEO terms) is a heavily debated topic. Google has flip-flopped their opinion on the importance of social signals in their ranking algorithm for years. But regardless of social media's direct measurement in Google's algorithm, sharing your website content on social media is an effective method for exposing your message to a wider audience and directing traffic to your website.

Here are some strategies for getting the most value out of social media sharing:

Mention other businesses in a blog post

Consider creating "Best of" blog posts on your website, like "Best Coffee Shops in (Your City)". Include links to local businesses you love in your post, then reach out to them personally. Send a quick e-mail like the one below. You can change out the bold text for the business name.

> *Hey [**Owner/Manager first name**],*
>
> *I wanted to tell you I'm a huge fan of [**restaurant, business, company**]. That's why I included you guys in my blog post on [**blog post topic**]. I linked to your website and social media to help spread the word about your incredible company to my readers. Check it out: [**insert link**].*
>
> *I'd love if you checked out this post. And if you'd like, share it with your fans as well.*
>
> *I look forward to stopping back in again soon for [**what the business does great**].*
>
> *Best,*
>
> *[**Your name**]*

Then, share your blog post to social media and tag any businesses you wrote about on Facebook or Twitter. They'll be able to quickly share or retweet your post to their audience.

By reaching out to businesses in different fields, you're exposing your content to a new audience, and should be gaining inbound links back to your website. This will be a big help to your search rankings. Who knows, you might even make a valuable business connection in the process!
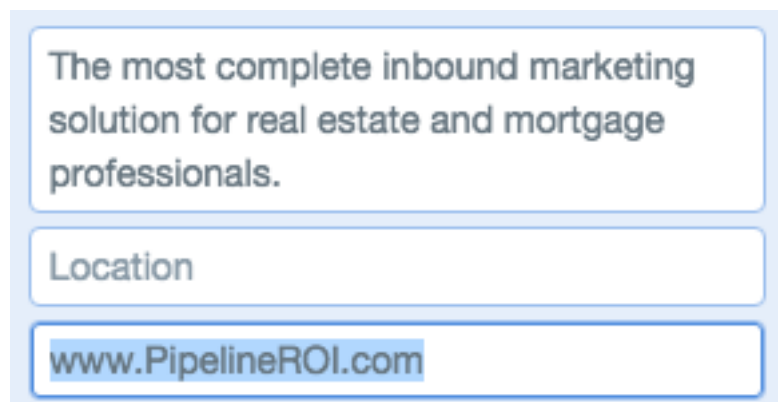
Optimize your profiles

You're able to put links back to your website from Facebook, Twitter, Pinterest, LinkedIn, and Instagram. If you're using any of these social networks and haven't included links to your website in your profile, you're decreasing your chance of converting social followers into website leads. Here's how to add a link to each of your social profiles:

Facebook: Head to your Page timeline and hover over the pencil at the top of the "About" section in the left-hand column and click "Manage". Then, you'll be directed to a page where you can add your website URL.

Twitter: From your Twitter profile home page, click "Edit profile" just below the right-hand corner of your cover photo. You can then add your website URL just below your bio and location.
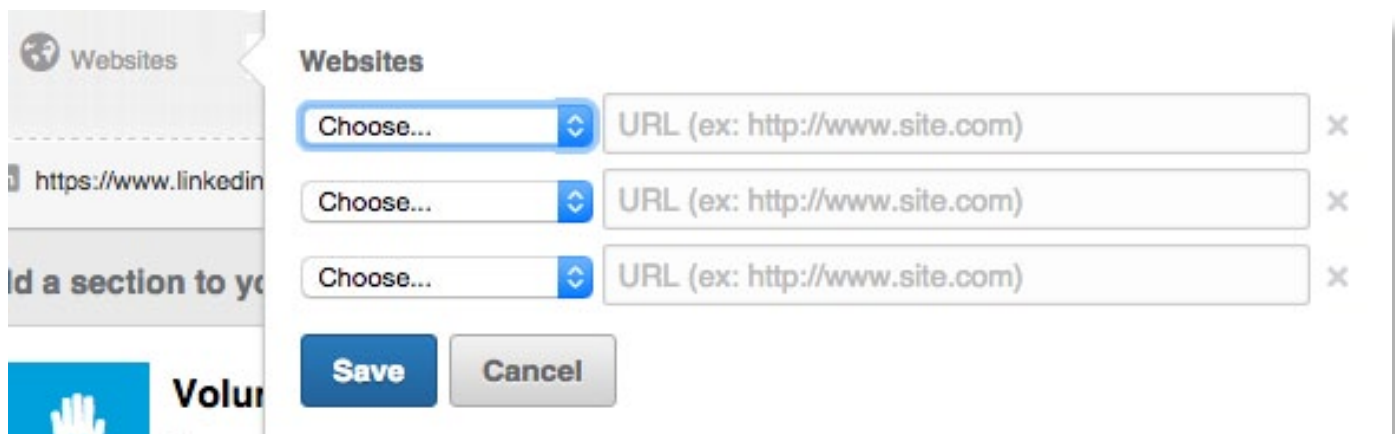
Instagram: Go to your profile from the app and hit "Edit Your Profile" in the top right. Then you can add your website URL in the third box, under your name and username.

Pinterest: From your Pinterest profile page, click "Edit profile" in the top right. At the bottom of the pop-up, you'll see a blank spot to enter your Website URL. If you have a Pinterest business account, you can also verify your website using **these steps.**

LinkedIn: From your LinkedIn profile, click the "Contact Info" card below your headline section. From there, you can add all of your contact information, including your website URL.

Schedule your content

While your social media accounts shouldn't just act as broadcast systems for your website content, you should occasionally share your own blog posts and content pages to social media to direct traffic back to your site.

When you publish a new blog post, schedule out a few posts in advance to Facebook and Twitter with different messages linking to the same content. Spread these out over multiple weeks, at different times of the day, to target different followers. This strategy allows you to get a handful of social media posts from the same content, without seeming repetitive.

Our inbound marketing platform comes with a **built-in social scheduler** where you can easily schedule posts linking to your own content and content from others. Other social media tools like Buffer and Hootsuite allow you to schedule posts, too.

Together, these strategies are a great start for building your mortgage website's search rankings. While you won't skip to the top of Google's rankings immediately, over time these methods of content creation and sharing will give your website a boost. This will lead to more website traffic and ultimately more website leads.

See what our inbound marketing platform can do for you!

Get the mortgage marketing system that works

Website | eSigning | Social media tools | Drip marketing

GET A FREE DEMO