

The Eventbrite logo, featuring the word "Eventbrite" in a white, sans-serif font inside a white rounded rectangle with a thin black border. The background of the entire page is a blurred photograph of a conference. In the foreground, the back of a man's head and shoulders is visible, wearing a dark suit jacket. In the background, a man in a dark suit is standing at a podium, speaking into a microphone. The setting appears to be a modern conference room with large windows and a presentation screen.

| Britepaper

# The Complete Guide To SEO For Conferences

Improve your conference's ranking, increase sales, and beat your competitors through search engine optimization.



When you want to find information, where do you turn? Do you dig out that dusty old Encyclopedia Britannica your parents gave you? Do you walk across the street to ask your neighbor?

Or do you Google?

If you're like most people, you regularly use search engines to find information. Google alone processes 3.5 billion searches per day — and that doesn't factor in Bing, Yahoo Search, or other engines. If you want to grow attendance to your conference, you'll also want to rank highly in searches. Whether you're targeting a specific industry, interest group, or educational field, people are searching for what you offer. The trick is in getting found.

Getting a handle on SEO, or Search Engine Optimization, is step one to increasing conference signups. SEO is foundational, as it's often the first access point to your other marketing materials. In this Britepaper, we'll cover crucial best practices for increasing your conference's SEO.

Google Position & Average Click Through Rate										Source: MathSight.org
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	
36.3%	12.7%	9.2%	7.3%	5.6%	3.8%	3.4%	3.2%	2.8%	2.1%	

The higher your position in search results, the higher the average click-through rate.

# Plan for the Long Game

SEO isn't like a one-off email — it isn't even like a year-long promotional campaign. Optimizing for search is a never-ending project, and the results aren't always immediately apparent.

Andreas Voniatis, Managing Director at Alchemy Viral (an agency specializing in SEO) told us that SEO is about much more than high ranking. Once you've enticed an attendee to click, you have to make them stay. "You want to ensure the correct product or service page appears for a given search," he says. The content (whether it's your website, an informational article, or a registration page) must be relevant to the search terms.

Also keep in mind that SEO is a long game strategy. "Typically a company will achieve their SEO campaign objectives after seven months," Voniatis says — as long as that company follows best practices for site optimization, content strategy, and digital PR. "Of course the benefits may be seen as early as the first month, depending on the competitiveness of the search space in the target market."

Ranking highly in search takes time and energy, but compared to the costs of other online marketing channels — such as PPC, paid social, or purchasing leads — the pricetag is low. In short, your conference may not immediately see the fruits of your SEO labor, but you'll definitely see them in time.

## Your SEO Strategy

Use these steps to create the framework of your SEO strategy

- 1. Define goals:** What are you trying to achieve?
- 2. Identify keywords:** Using keyword research, competitor profiles, and Google trends to find the words and phrases you want to rank for.
- 3. Research the competition:** Find out who currently ranks well for your chosen search terms and why.
- 4. Leverage content marketing:** Build a content publishing plan to improve your SEO for those key phrases.
- 5. Measure:** We recommend monitoring your success against goals on a monthly, quarterly, and annual basis.

# Step 1: Defining Your Goals

As with any marketing campaign, you need to start at the end — what do you hope to achieve? It's helpful to think about your SEO goals as “absolute,” “relative,” or “outcome-based.” A smart SEO strategy will include all three types:

- > **Absolute** — i.e. “Rank No. 1 for the term ‘Technology conference’”
- > **Relative** — i.e. “Improve your organic ranking from 12th to 4th for ‘Best marketing conference US’”
- > **Outcome-based** — i.e. “Increase organic search traffic by 50%.”

To create realistic SEO goals, you may need to skip ahead to Step 2 — keyword research. How does your conference rank for relevant terms today?



## Brite Tip: Get in the SEO Know

SEO best practices are always evolving. Luckily, there are many excellent sources of SEO news, thought leadership, and tips. Here are our top 5:

[The Google Blog](#) — get your tips straight from the algorithm-makers!

[The Kissmetrics Blog](#) — constantly updated, full of smart data analysis.

[Search Engine Watch](#) — frequent posts, detailed explainers.

[Search Engine Land](#) — a popular source of breaking SEO news.

[The Moz Blog](#) — advanced explanations and expert thought leadership.

## Step 2: Identifying Keywords

SEO is a crucial part of your inbound marketing strategy — your strategy for organically getting found by your ideal attendees. If your marketing materials speak to a topic relevant to your audience, and capture their attention with quality content, it will naturally help your search rankings. But your strategy should go farther — even the highest quality content needs to be researched and created with SEO in mind.

Before you create your content, identify the keywords your attendees are searching for. Google's Keyword Planner is a great (free) resource for understanding keyword performance, testing out multiple keywords, or comparing keywords to each other. The MozBar is another good resource — it will tell you the page and domain authority of top ranking search results, so you can estimate our chances of ranking highly.

Beyond these tools, it may be helpful to brainstorm with internal stakeholders. People use search to answer questions and solve problems... What can they learn or solve at your conference? If your conference is for university educators, for example, you might optimize for queries like "Trends in higher education" or "How to find a tenure-track position."

## Step 3: Competitive Research

In search, you have two types of competitors. First, the obvious kind — other conferences who are competing for your attendees. Second, you have your search competitors. These are websites who, regardless of their goals, are also trying to rank for your search terms.

Successful online competitors have often done the research beforehand, so looking at the search phrases in their title tags can be a rich source of phrases that drive revenue or inquiries. Using a tool like Deep Crawl can help businesses crawl large sites to get a database of a competitor's title tags.

<sup>1</sup> These are readability tests designed to indicate comprehension difficulty when reading a passage of contemporary academic English.

<sup>2</sup> To learn more about discount links and Google's Penguin update, take a look at Andrea's interview here: [http://searchenginewatch.com/article/!""!/Dissecting-Google-Penguin-!.-»-What-Factors-Mattered-Study](http://searchenginewatch.com/article/!)



Nothing beats modeling a leading competitor whose SEO tactics are already working well. Most of the game-changing factors in SEO are content and online PR-driven, so we've listed a number of tools to help you analyze why your competitor is succeeding:

**Google Site search:** By typing site:[your competitor's homepage URL] into Google, you'll instantly see how many pages your competitor has. This will give you a baseline, and help you determine whether you have enough content.

**Ahrefs:** This is a backlink checker/SEO tool that can provide a list of sites linking to your competitor. The list can also be prioritized by Domain Rank (an estimator of Google's PageRank, which measures content authority).

**MathSight:** The list from Ahrefs, or any other source, can be analyzed for reading ease using MathSight's algorithms. This will help you weed out any bad links — links that won't be credited by search engines like Google.

Using the tools above, you can build a list of sites that will:

- > Send you relevant site traffic
- > Expose your brand to new audiences
- > Link to your website, which benefits your SEO

## Step 4: Leveraging Content

The best content marketing is helpful, engaging, and relevant to your audience. Luckily, these qualities are also valuable from an SEO perspective. When search engines see that people keep returning to and engaging with your site — because you've created such high-quality content — they reward you with better ranking.

### **Make it Share-Worthy**

Create educational, shareable content that promotes your conference. Think interviews with speakers, guides to restaurants near your conference site, or a list of reasons to attend. When someone signs up, make it easy to share. Place social sharing buttons on your registration pages, announcements/updates, and more. Finally, leverage prime real estate. If your organization has its own social profiles, use your profile pictures and background photos to advertise your conference. These are relatively simple to change, so consider using this space for daily countdowns or special promotions.

### **Mix Evergreen and Fresh Content**

Search engines value “evergreen” content — content that ages well over time — but they also reward sites that offer fresh content. Creating value on a regular basis shows that you’re staying relevant. So the more frequently you update your content, the more often engines like Google will crawl your site. Make sure you’re frequently updating your conference’s key pages, adding posts to your blog, and increasing the content available in your resource center.

### **Index and optimize existing content**

If you have a repeat event — such as an annual conference — you likely have a ton of content that could be indexed for Google, and used to help boost your conference website. If you have video footage from your last event, consider getting them transcribed (it might be cheaper than you think). If you have speaker interviews, compile them on a dedicated resources page. Ensure photos or other non-text assets are properly tagged and have descriptive text around them.

## Callout: Partnering Up

As you build a reputation for publishing quality content, you may be able to attract other big names to start writing and guest blogging for your conference’s site. Past and future speakers at your event, industry experts, and notable attendees are all fair game. This also reduces the burden of creating fresh posts while maintaining frequency.

You’ll also want to identify key sites to contribute to yourself. Online trade journals, relevant news sources — what are the most important sites to your attendees? If you do contribute to an external site, insist on linking back to your site within the post. A link back to your site from a credible source will help your page rank.

So how do you know a partner is credible? Andreas recommends asking questions — “Do they accept any writer? What is the current standard of guest post writing? Do the other guest blog authors have any real credibility?...If the answers are positive on all counts, the risk of getting penalized for working with such a site is very low.”

## Step 5: Measuring Your Progress

So you've implemented SEO best practices...how will you track your progress? Here are a few resources to help you get started:

**Keyword Rank Tracking Tools (Moz, RankTracker, GinzaMetrics, STAT):**

These tools will allow you to track your chosen keyword rankings on a daily or weekly basis. If an important keyword isn't moving up the ranks as you'd hoped, consider going back and re-optimizing the page — just don't go overboard!

**Query Analysis (Google Webmaster Tools):** Check out the “Search Analytics” report in Google Webmaster Tools to learn which queries your site is ranking for, whether intentionally or not. Sort by “impressions.” You'll want to look for queries that have a lot of impressions, but for which your site is not ranking well — these are opportunities. You'll also want to investigate queries that you're ranking well for but have a low click-thru rate — in this case, consider using a more enticing or relevant title tag and meta description.

**Traffic Analysis (Google Analytics):** Once you start seeing traffic trickle in, leverage a tool like Google Analytics to understand how visitors are engaging with your content. In the Landing Page report you can drill down to a specific URL to uncover important behavioral data, such as bounce rate, time on site, and (to some extent) keywords that are driving people to that page.





Are people bouncing right away, or only spending 10 seconds on your homepage? Perhaps it's worth considering the intent of the visitors landing there. Are you answering their questions? As an example, maybe you notice lots of people are bouncing immediately from your pricing page. Some questions you might ask yourself are: Do I actually have the price listed? If so, is the price too expensive compared to other conferences in my space? Am I not doing enough to describe what an attendee might get for that price tag? And so on. Be sure to set up "Goals" in Google Analytics so you can see how these clicks translate into dollars.

**Rinse and repeat.** You may notice some pages are performing better than others in the rankings. Don't worry — if it were that easy to rank, we wouldn't have written such a lengthy paper about it. Some questions to ask are:

- > Are the keyword you chose too competitive? Good luck trying to rank for "conference" with your newly created website. Although there may be a lot of search volume around that keyword, you're competing with thousands of other major conferences by chasing that keyword.
- > Is your keyword relevant enough? To continue our example, someone searching for "conferences" may be looking for something very specific and unrelated to your event — like a local basket weaving conference. (No offense to the basket weaving conferences out there — we're sure they're wonderful!) Again, the trick is to optimize around keywords that are searched, relevant, and not overly competitive
- > Are you going beyond body copy? Consider taking your pages to the next level by experimenting with title tags and meta descriptions. Remember, this is what will ultimately appear in the search engine results as your listing. Much like a traditional advertisement, this copy should be compelling and readable. And don't forget to incorporate your keywords!



# Conclusion

If you want to grow attendance to your conference, optimize your website for search. Luckily, Search Engine Optimization boils down to one simple behavior: consistently providing original, valuable content.

Want to learn more about planning, promoting, and growing your conference? Visit [Eventbrite's resource library](#), for everything from inspirational case studies, to tactical day-of tips.

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## About Eventbrite

Eventbrite provides a cost-effective, innovative ticketing, and registration platform to help festival and convention organizers set-up, manage and sell out their events. Ticket buyers find it easy to search and buy tickets online, and then share their excitement with their community. With more than 165M tickets sold as of March 2014, Eventbrite is one of the fastest growing ticketing providers worldwide and has powered more than 100,000 festivals and consumer events since its inception in 2006. To learn more, visit [www.eventbrite.co.uk](http://www.eventbrite.co.uk)

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