

The Definitive Guide To SEO In 2021

This is the ultimate guide to search engine optimization in 2021.

And let me be clear about something:

This is NOT your average “SEO in 2021” predictions post.

Yes, I’ll cover the most important SEO trends this year.

But you’re also going to see **new strategies** that are working great right now.

So if you’re looking to improve your SEO next year, you’ll love this updated guide.



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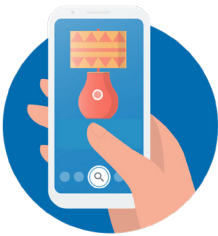
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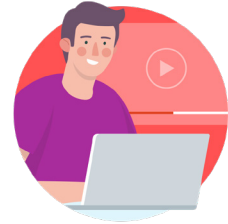
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CHAPTER 1:

Core Web Vitals

According to Google, core web vitals are going to become a ranking factor in May 2021.

And in this chapter I'm going to show you exactly how to get your site ready for this upcoming Google update.

(Including a real-life example of how I dramatically improved Backlinko's core web vital scores.)

Let's dive in.



Core Web Vitals: What You Need to Know

Core web vitals are a set of three specific web page experience metrics that Google considers super important:

- Largest contentful paint
- First input delay
- Cumulative layout shift

Core Web Vitals Are Part Of Google's Overall Evaluation Of "Page Experience"



CORE WEB VITALS

LOADING

Largest Contentful Paint (LCP)

INTERACTIVITY

First Input Delay (FID)

VISUAL STABILITY

Cumulative Layout Shift (CLS)

OTHER WEB VITALS

MOBILE FRIENDLY

SAFE BROWSING

HTTPS

NO INTRUSIVE
INTERSTITIALS

According to Google, core web vitals will directly impact rankings.

stability, to help site owners measure user experience on the web.

Today, we're building on this work and providing an early look at an upcoming **Search ranking change** that incorporates these page experience metrics.

we will introduce a new signal that combines Core Web Vitals with our existing signals for page experience to provide a holistic picture of the quality of a user's experience on a web page.

That said, they also point out that core web vitals aren't a make or break ranking factor. In other words, you can still rank with poor core web vitals scores.

developers to bring Core Web Vitals into their offerings.

While all of the components of page experience are important we will prioritize pages with the best information overall, even if some aspects of page experience are subpar. good page experience

doesn't override having great, relevant content.

However, in cases where there are multiple pages that have similar content, page experience becomes

much more important for visibility in Search

That said, there's really no reason NOT to optimize your site's core web vitals.

So it makes sense to set some time aside to work on them.

Here's how.

How To Improve Your Core Web Vital Scores

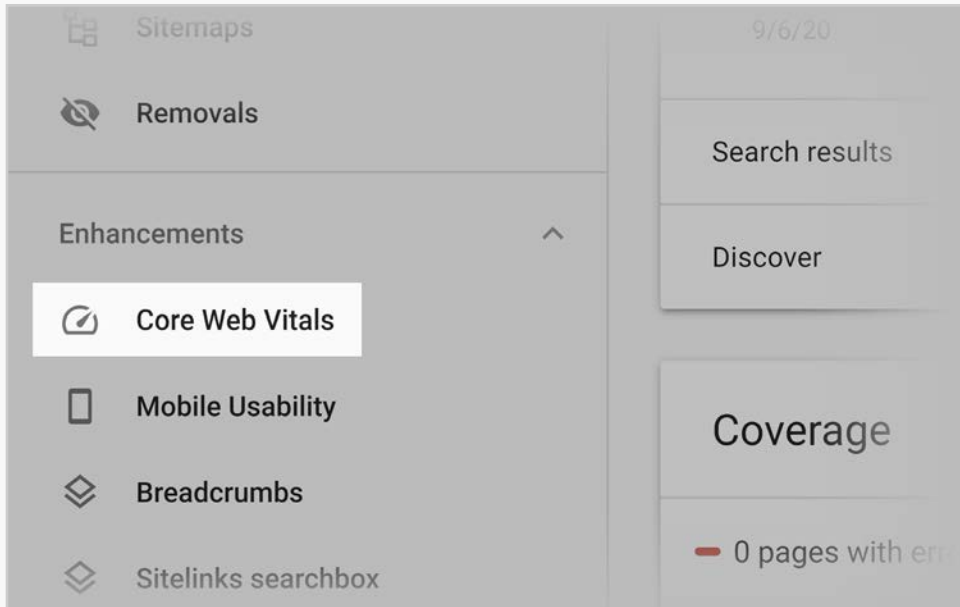
To be clear:

The exact steps you take to improve your core web vitals depends on your site.

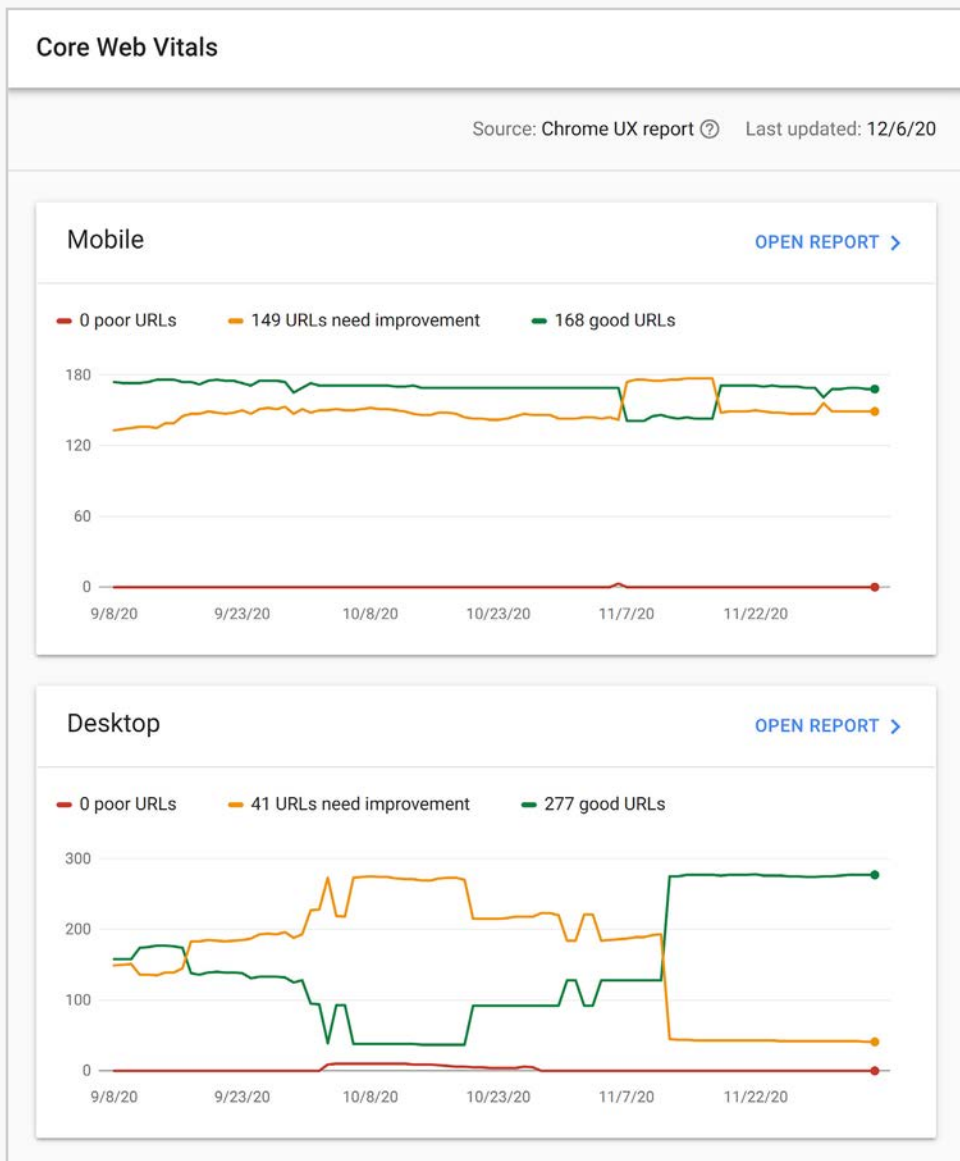
For example, a site that runs on Shopify will be different compared to one that runs on WordPress.

That said, here's the process you can use to figure out what you need to fix.

First, pop open [the Google Search Console](#) and click on "Core Web Vitals".

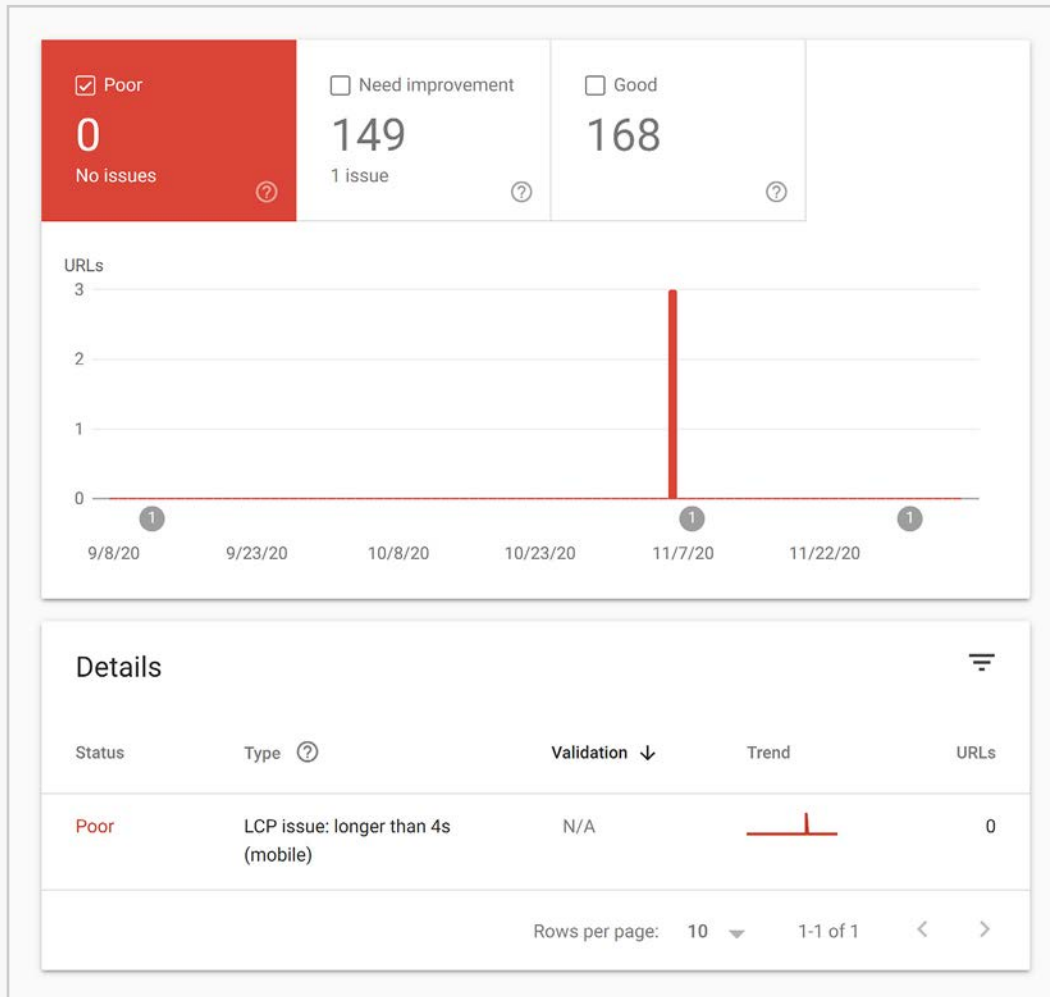


Then, take a look at how the pages on your site stack up.



(I basically ignore the desktop scores. [Google's mobile-first index](#) means that mobile scores are what really matter).

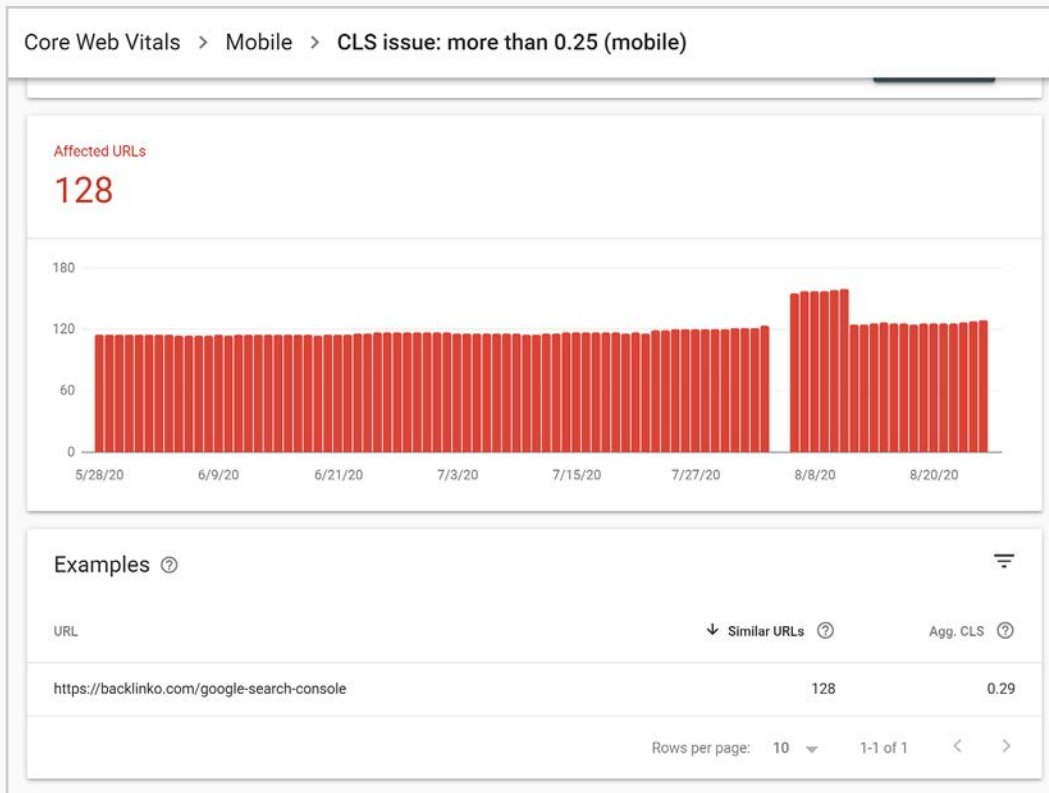
You want to really zero-in on “poor URLs”.



In my opinion, Google is going to punish poor URLs more than boost up good URLs. So you want to prioritize getting your URLs out of the red.

Again, how you tackle this depends a lot on the core web vital that you're struggling with.

For example, a bunch of my pages had a poor CLS score.

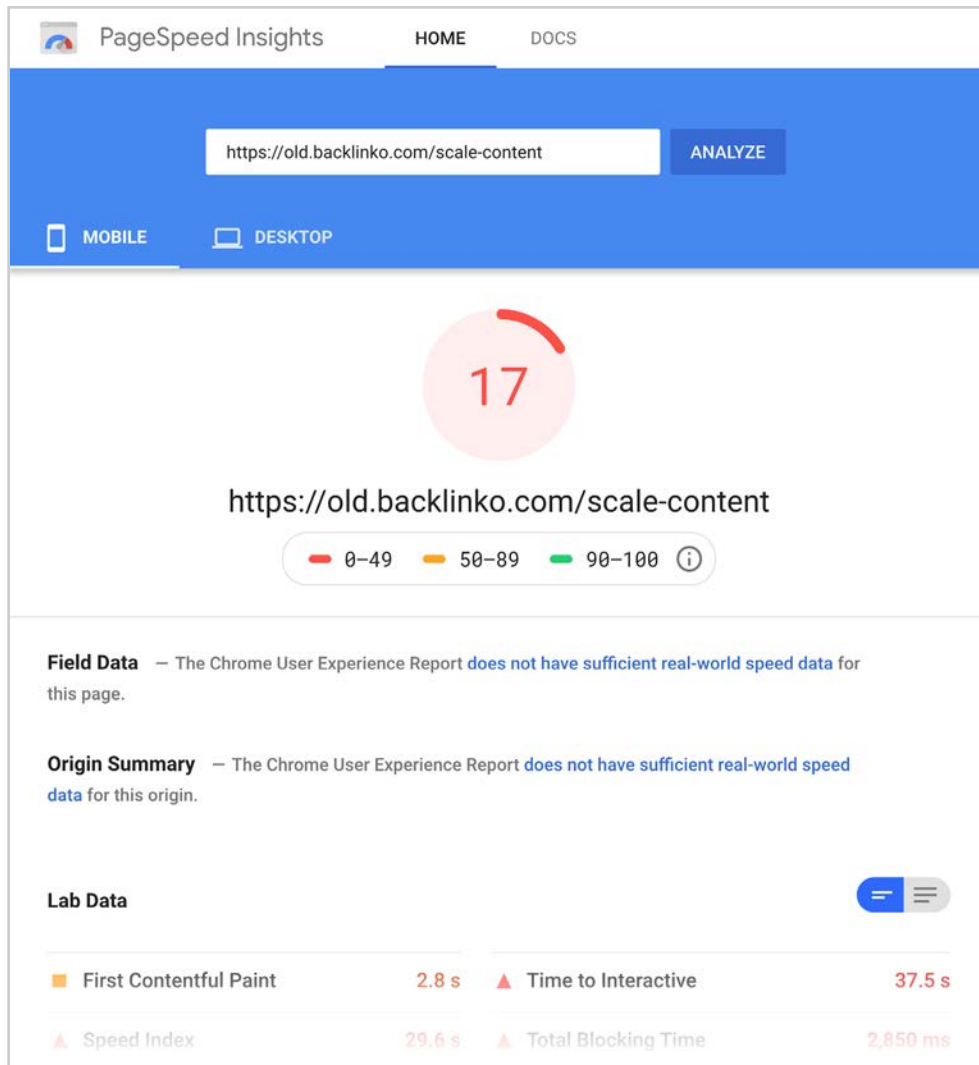


So we worked on improving the stability of pages as they loaded.

How We Improved Backlinko's Core Web Vitals

When Google announced their upcoming page experience update, I realized that we needed to make a change.

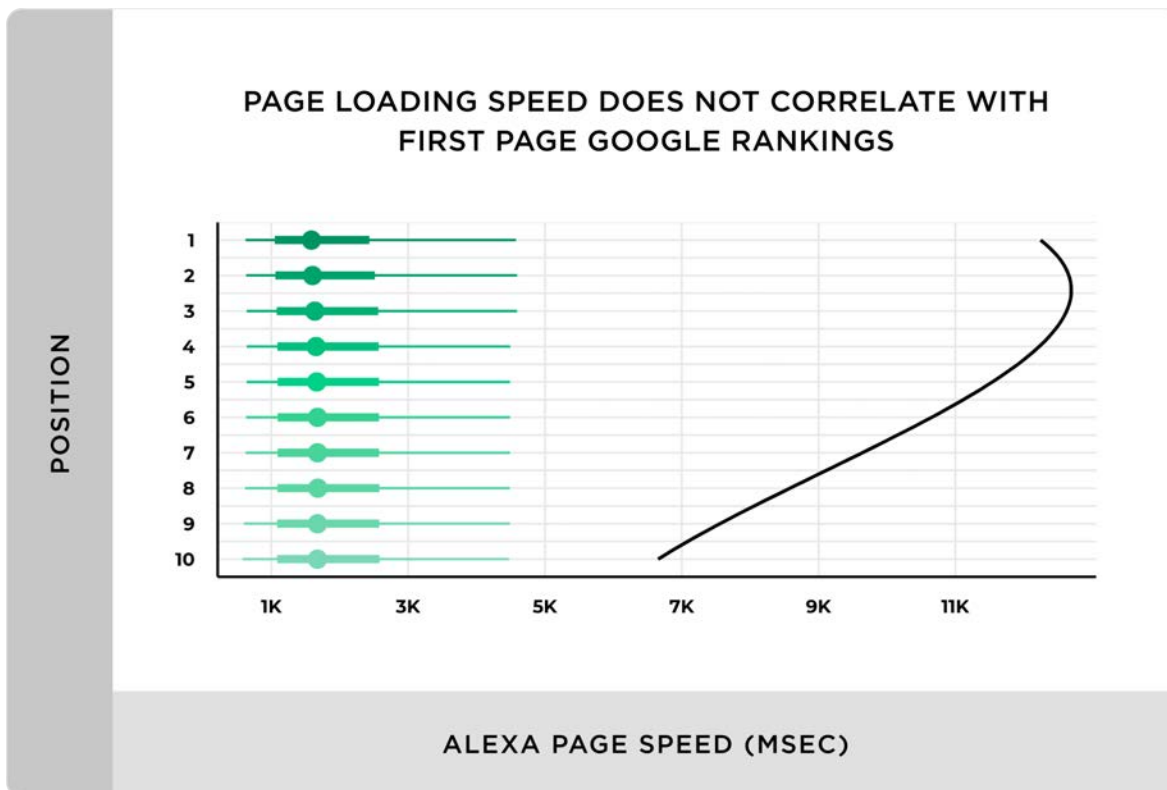
You see, Backlinko's load times were slow. Very slow.



It wasn't for lack of trying. We used a lightweight WordPress theme. Compressed our images. And more.

But the fact was: Backlinko's pages were HUGE. Some of our posts had 40+ high-res screenshots. Plus visuals, embedded videos and animated images.

The thing was, this didn't seem to hurt our rankings at all. Which makes sense considering that our search engine ranking factors analysis found [no correlation between page speed and rankings](#).



But this update was different. Google wasn't just looking at page loading speed. They were going to try to directly measure user experience.

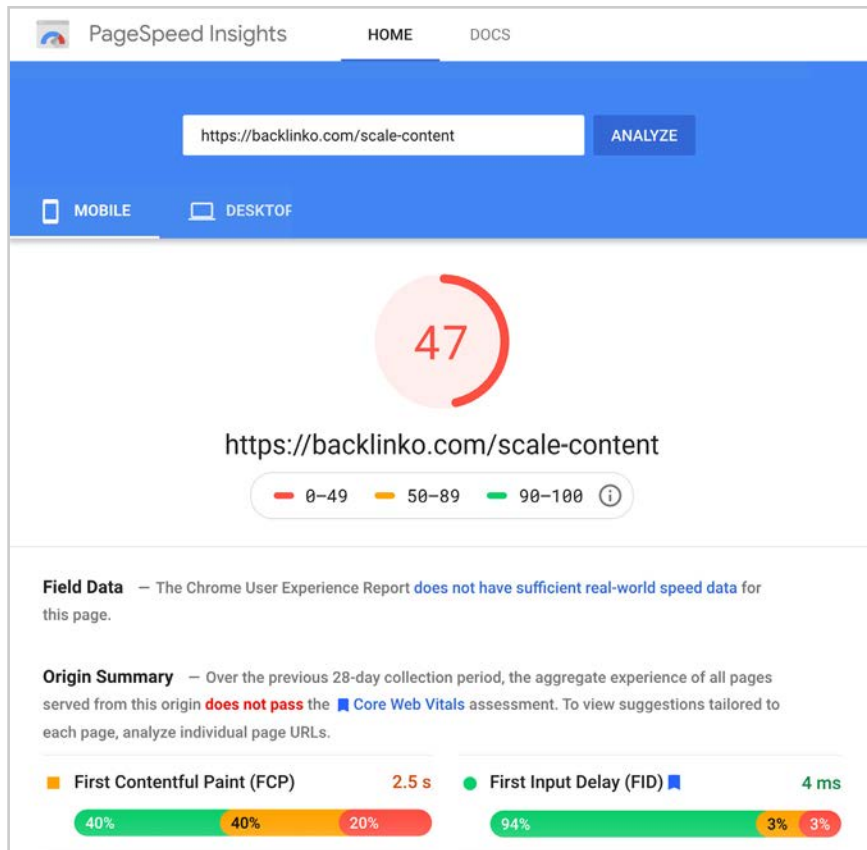
In other words: this time they weren't messing around.

So I got to work.

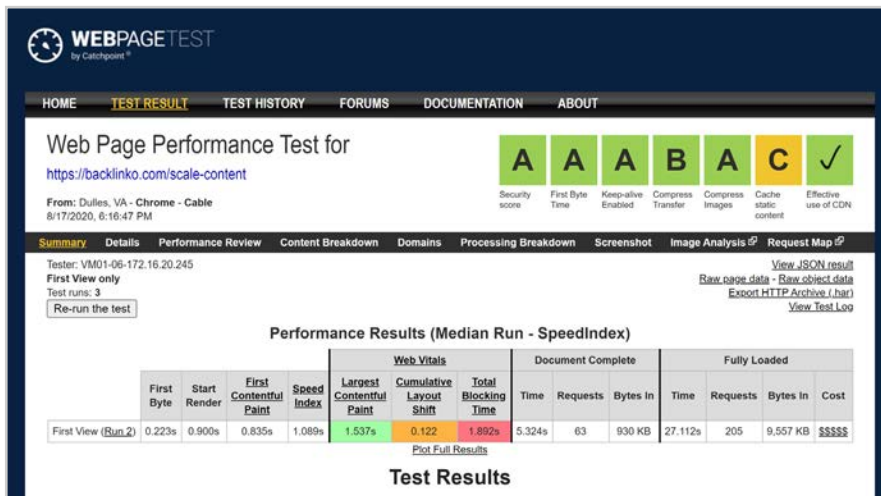
Specifically, I hired an agency to overhaul Backlinko's code. It now runs on Next.js.

It wasn't cheap. Or easy.

But in the end, this significantly improved our core web vital scores.



And our overall load times.



Fortunately, you probably don't have to completely overhaul your site's code. Backlinko was kind of in a unique situation. Which is why we had to take drastic measures.

But 9 times out of 10, you can improve your core web vital scores using the tips that I outlined above.

And with that, it's time for chapter 2.

CHAPTER 2:

Google Passage Ranking

In October [Google announced](#) a new search technology called “Passages”.

This feature allows Google to rank specific sections of a page (“a passage”) independently.

This feature is going to affect 7% of all searches, which is a massive number.

(To put that into context, Google Penguin only impacted [3.1% of all queries.](#))

Let’s see how to optimize for this new Google ranking factor.



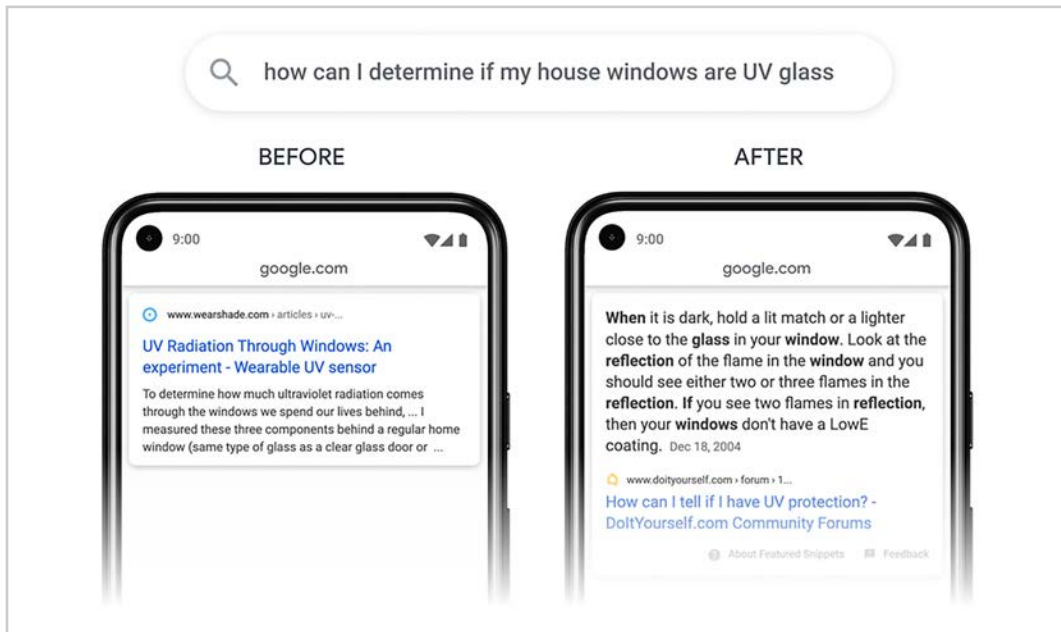
How Google Passage Ranking Works

Passages allows Google to rank specific, relevant passages from a specific page. Not just the page itself.

(Kind of like a souped up version of Featured Snippets.)

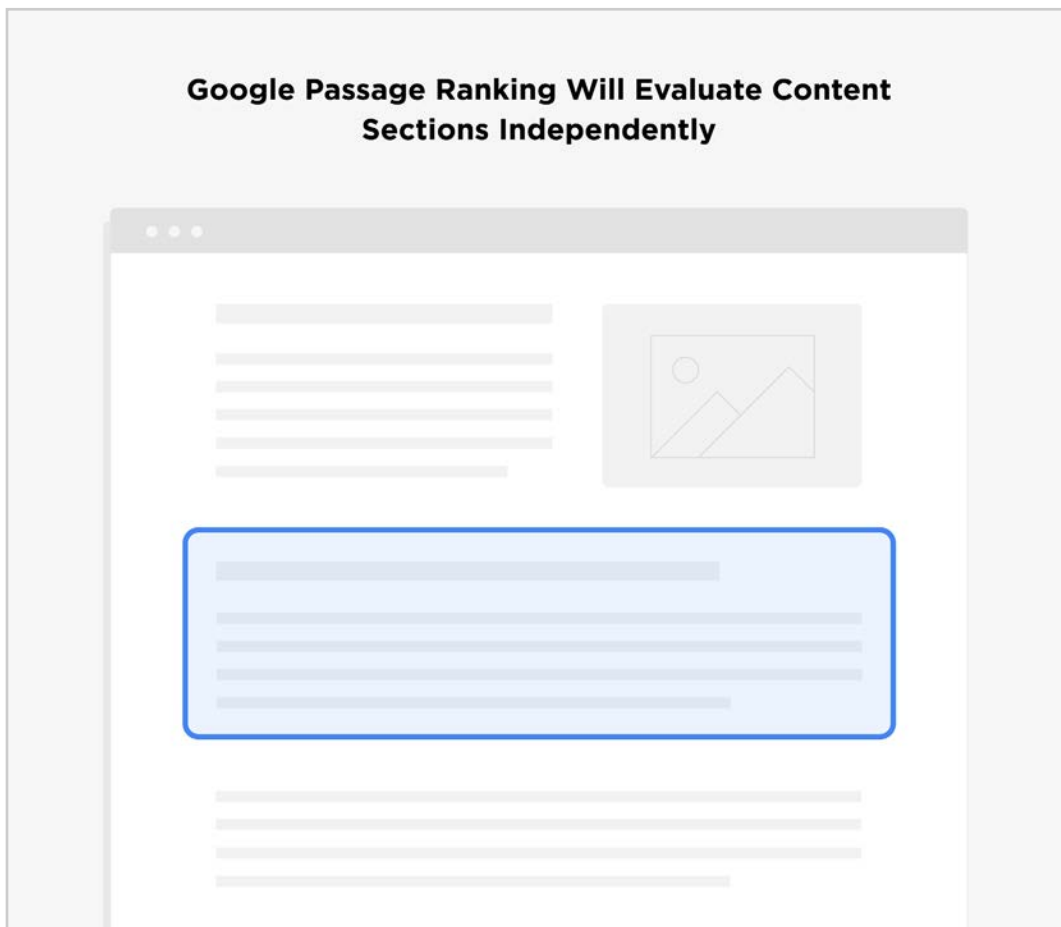
Here’s an example from Google’s feature announcement:

Pinterest gets 600 million visual searches per month ([source](#)).



So instead of Google ONLY taking into account the relevancy of an entire page.

They'll now also size up the relevancy of a specific section of that page.



That said, Google has made it clear that they will still evaluate entire pages.



So backlinks, on-page SEO, UX signals, and Google's other page-level ranking factors will still apply.

The only difference is that a single page now has more chances to rank. That is, assuming the page is optimized and organized.

Which is exactly what I'm going to cover right now.

Organize Your Content Into Discrete Sections

Yes, Google will rank passages of your page semi-independently.

But that doesn't mean they can easily divvy up a disorganized page.

Why?

Google may now look at each section like a mini web page.

Organizing Content Into Discrete Sections May Help With Google Passage Ranking



Which means your content needs to be divided up into dedicated sections.

And each section should cover a specific subtopic.

You may have been doing this already. If not, I recommend going back and organizing your content into VERY clear sections.

For example, take a look at this page on my site: "[SEO vs. SEM: What's The Difference?](#)".

BACKLINKO Home About Newsletter

< SEO Fundamentals

SEO Marketing Hub 2.0 • SEO Fundamentals • SEO vs. SEM

8 RESOURCES

- ▶ What Is SEO?
- ▶ Search Engine Positioning
- ▶ SEO vs. SEM
- ▶ Search Engine Ranking Factors
- ▶ SEO Best Practices
- ▶ SEO Metrics
- ▶ SEO Friendly Web Design
- ▶ What Are SERPs?

What's the Difference Between SEO and SEM?

The main difference is that Search Engine Optimization (SEO) is focused on optimizing a website in order to get traffic from organic search results. On the other hand, the goal of Search Engine Marketing (SEM) is to get traffic and visibility from both organic and paid search.

Put another way:

Google's search results are divided into two main categories: the paid search results and the organic search results.

This page is organized into 21 different sections.

SEO vs SEM: Main Features

SEO Overview

SEO is the practice of continually optimizing a website in order to rank in the organic, non-paid **search engine results pages (SERPs)**.

Google uses **200+ ranking signals** in their algorithm. That said, SEO can be divided into four main subcategories: **on-page SEO**, off-page SEO, technical SEO and User Interaction Signals.

On-Page SEO: This is where you optimize your website around keywords that your target customer searches for in Google, Bing and other search engines. For example, one on-page SEO best practice is to include your main keyword in your title tag, meta description and

SEO vs. SEM: How Long It Takes to See Results

One of the main differences between SEO and SEM is **speed**.

The fact is: SEO takes time. A lot of time. Especially if your site is new and doesn't have a lot of backlinks yet.

In fact, an analysis by **Ahrefs** found that **it takes an average of 2 years** to rank on the first page of Google. And many of the top-ranking pages were first published 3+ years ago.

SEO or PPC: What to Focus On

Should you focus 100% of your digital marketing efforts on SEO? Or should you combine SEO and PPC and launch a full-on search marketing campaign.

When to Focus Just SEO

You Have a Very Limited Budget: If you're a startup or small business with a tiny marketing budget, you probably want to focus on SEO. You may not see an ROI on your SEO budget for months or years. But it still makes more sense than burning through your marketing budget on PPC ads that may only run for a week.

(Each section has a H3 subheading)

That way, Google can treat the content underneath each H3 as a mini web page. And rank it accordingly.

Double Down on Long Form Content

The downside of long form content USED to be that you could sometimes get beat by a more focused page.

For example, let's say you had a section on your page about writing blog post intros.



And someone else had **an entire page** dedicated to writing post intros.

Well, in some cases Google would rank the entire page about post intros over you.

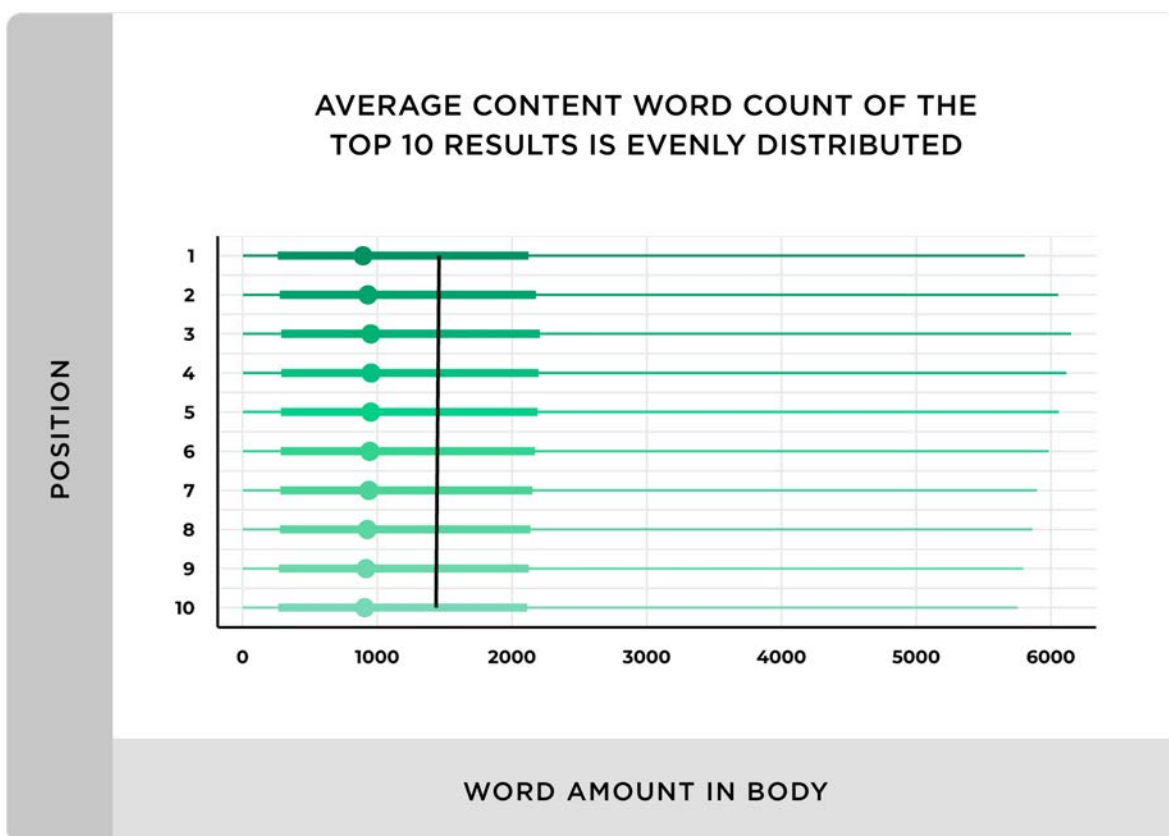
That's because your competitor's page was 100% about that topic. And to Google, that page could be a better UX for someone looking to write better introductions.

But that's about to change.

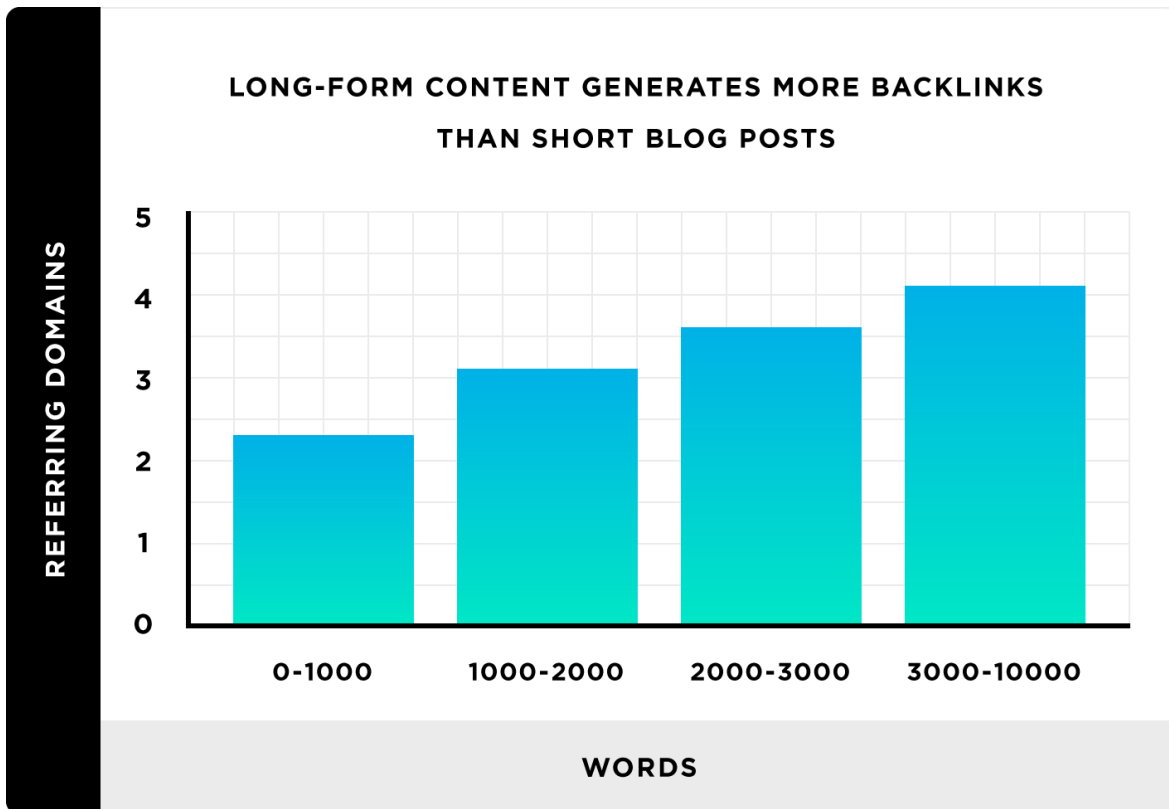
Today, Google can parse a single piece of long-form content into 5, 10, or even 100 unique passages.

And each one has a good shot of ranking in Google.

So yeah, long-form content already had [a rankings edge](#) in the SERPs.



And [for generating backlinks and social shares.](#)



Now that Google can divide up a single page into distinct passages, you can expect long-form content to work even better for SEO in 2021.

CHAPTER 3:

Optimize for Featured Snippets

According to SEMrush, 6.83% of all search results have a Featured Snippet.

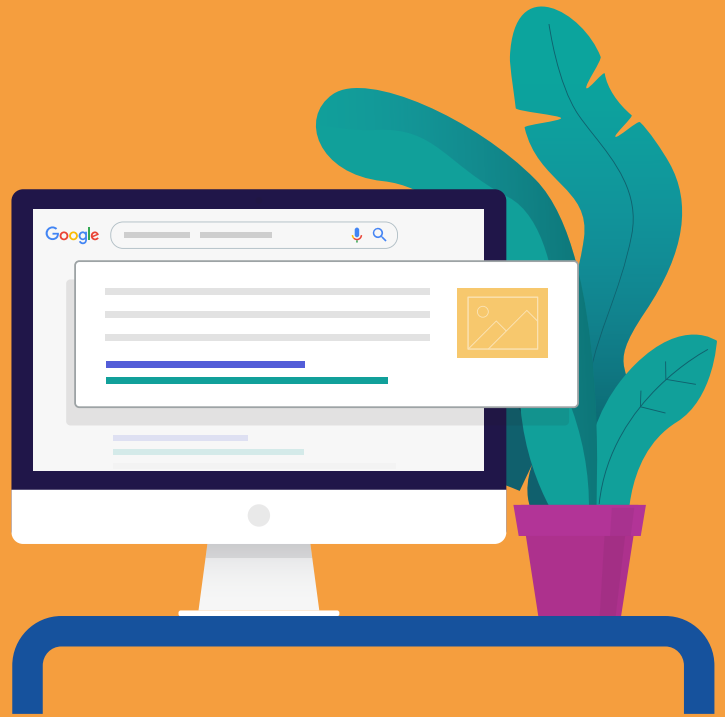
And yes: Featured Snippets are stealing A LOT of clicks from the #1 spot.

(As I like to say: “#0 is the new #1”)

The question is:

How do you get your content to appear in the Featured Snippet?

Well, that’s what this chapter is all about.



I recently decided to make ranking for Featured Snippets a priority.

And it helped us go from a handful of Featured Snippets rankings to **over 390**.

Organic Keywords ⁱ [How to use](#)

Position ▾ Volume ▾ KD ▾ CPC ▾ Tra

394 81 77 [More ▾](#)

Keyword	Volume ⁱ	KD
youtube community	3,300	4
youtube channel keywords	1,600	4

Here's the step-by-step process that I used.

1. Find Featured Snippet opportunities

Like most things in SEO, the first step is [keyword research](#).

Keywords that you already rank for.

AND

Keywords that have a Featured Snippet.

Why is it important to focus on keywords that you rank for already?





[99.58% of all Featured Snippets](#) are from pages that rank on the first page for that term.

So if you don't already rank in the top 10, you have zero chance of ranking in the Featured Snippet spot.

How do you find Featured Snippet Opportunities?

Ahrefs "Organic Keywords" report.

It shows you keywords that you rank for... that also have a Featured Snippet:

 4,512  2,225  866  686 More ▾			
Keyword		Volume ⁱ	KD ⁱ
youtube community	3	3,300	42
youtube channel keywords	3	1,600	37
serp	3	20,000	70
backlink	5	4,300	83
how to get backlinks	4	1,800	61
how many people use social media	3	3,600	93
nofollow code	4	500	67
channel art youtube	2	1,600	49
seo checklist	3	2,100	62
youtube seo	3	6,200	59
youtube hashtags	3	2,300	35

4,512 keywords? Looks like I have some work to do 😊

2. Add “Snippet Bait” to Your Page

“Snippet Bait” is a 40-60 word block of content specifically designed to rank in the Featured Snippet spot.

Why 40-60 words?

Well, [SEMrush analyzed nearly 7 million Featured Snippets](#). And they found that the most Featured Snippets are 40-60 words long.

PARAGRAPH	WORDS	CHARACTERS
AVERAGE	46	272
MAXIMUM	84	370

43 words long

Salesforce ranks **4th**, but earned the Featured Snippet.

Google search results for "how many companies in canada". The featured snippet is highlighted in a black box and reads: "According to the Business Development Bank of Canada (BDBC), there are 1.1 million small businesses in the country. Technically, 98.2 percent of all business in Canada falls into this category, with 87 percent of all small businesses comprised of fewer than 20 employees. Dec 3, 2014". Below the snippet are several search results including "Canadian Small Business by the Numbers - Salesforce Canada Blog" and "Key Small Business Statistics - June 2016 - SME research and statistics".

For example:

I wrote short Snippet Bait definitions for every page of [The Content Marketing Hub](#).

BACKLINKO Home About Newsletter

< Multimedia Content

Content Marketing Hub • Multimedia Content • Visual Content

4 RESOURCES

- ▶ Video Content
- ▶ Podcasting
- ▶ Visual Content
- ▶ Interactive Content

Visual Content

What Is Visual Content?

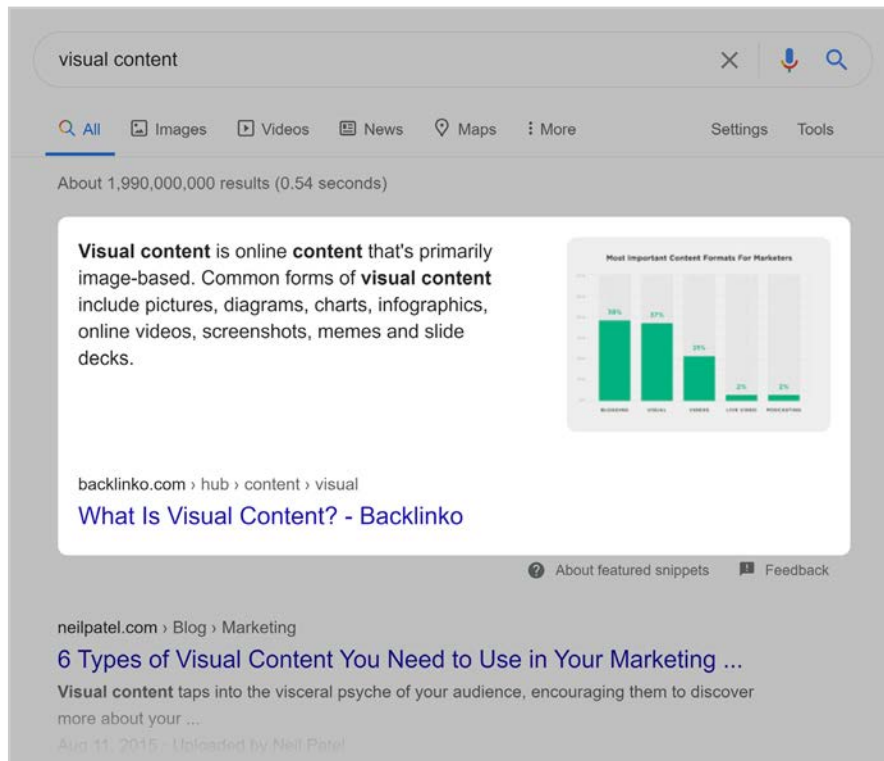
Visual content is online content that's primarily image-based. Common forms of visual content include pictures, diagrams, charts, infographics, online videos, screenshots, memes and slide decks.

Why Is Visual Content Marketing Important?

Visual content is exploding right now.

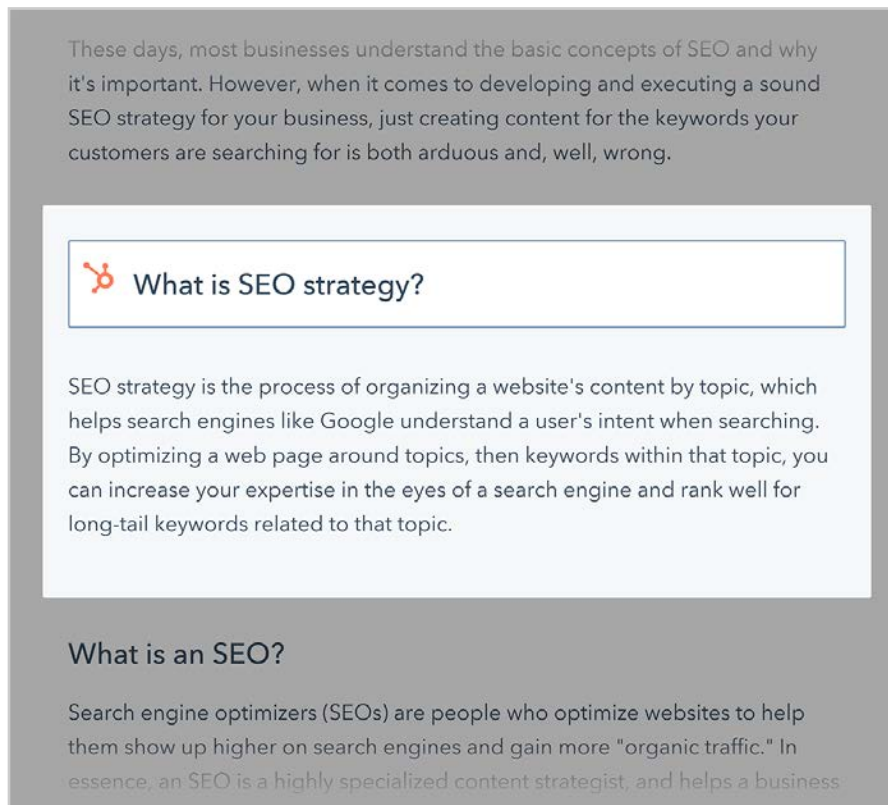
Highly-visual social media platforms, like YouTube and Instagram, are growing fast.

And these helped my content rank in the Featured Snippet spot for lots of definition keywords.



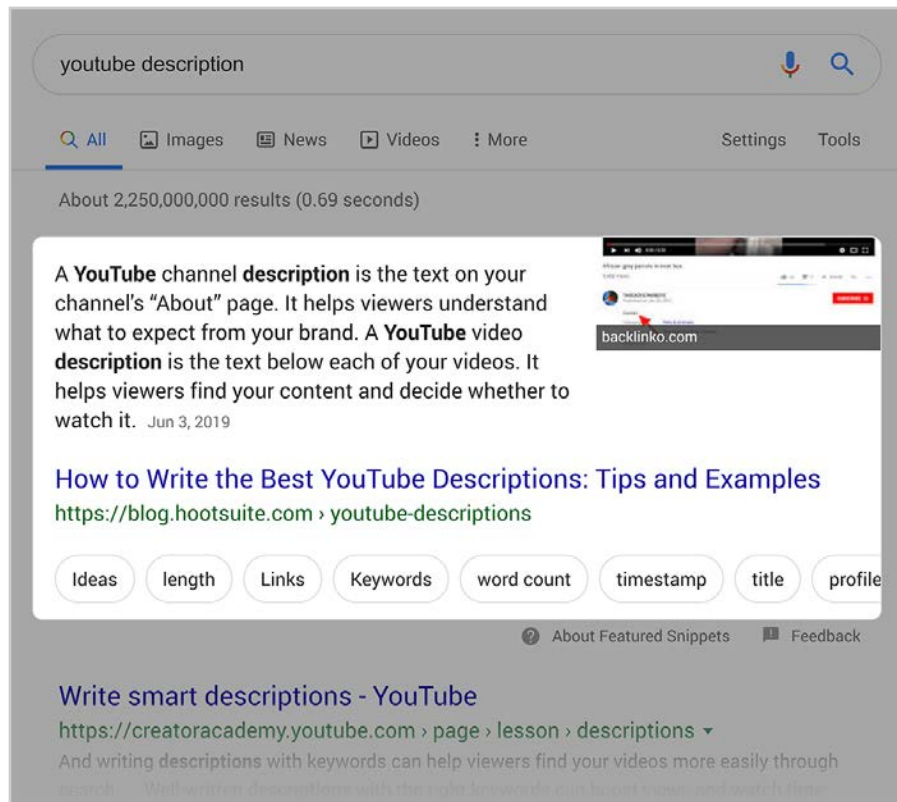
[HubSpot](#) takes Snippet Bait to another level.

They add little boxes to their posts **that actually look like Featured Snippets**:

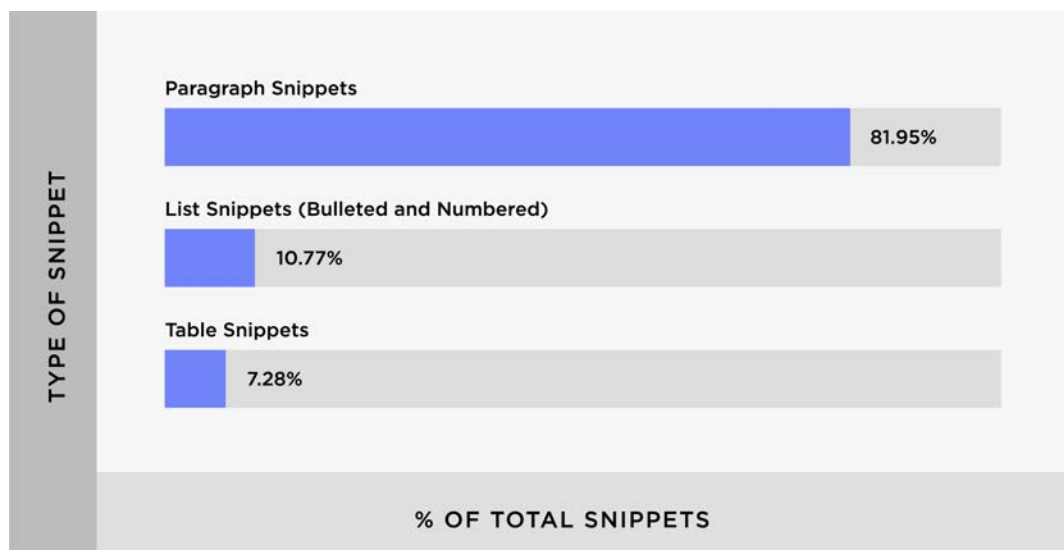


3. Format your content for other types of Featured Snippets

Snippet Bait works best for so-called “Paragraph Snippets”, like this:



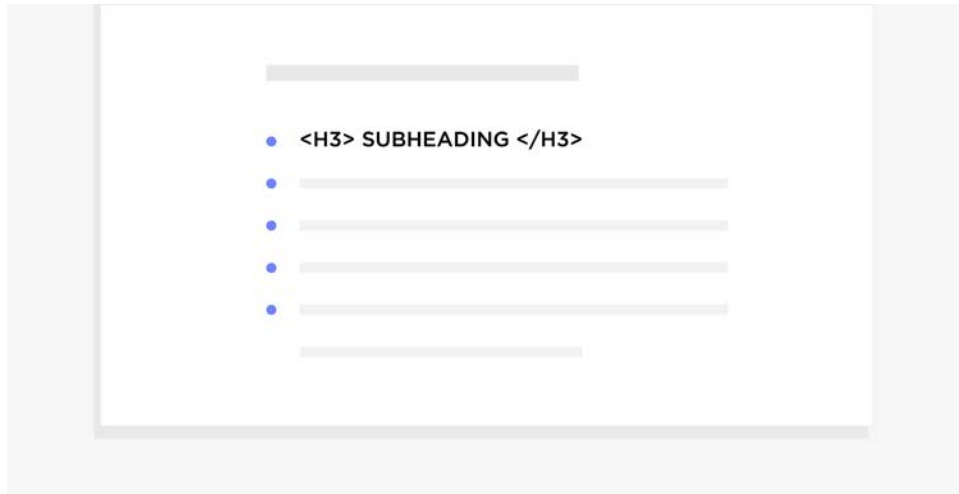
Even though paragraph snippets make up 81.9% of all Featured Snippets...



...they're not the only one.

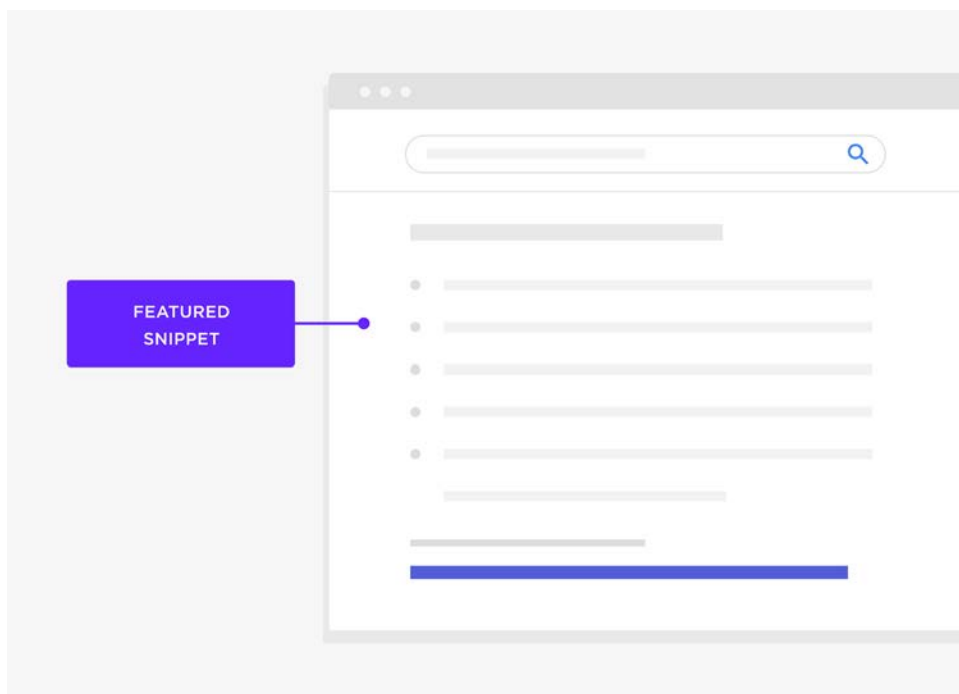
If you want to rank for List Snippets...

Use H2 or H3 subheaders for every item on your list.



(You can manually check you HTML to see if this is set up correctly)

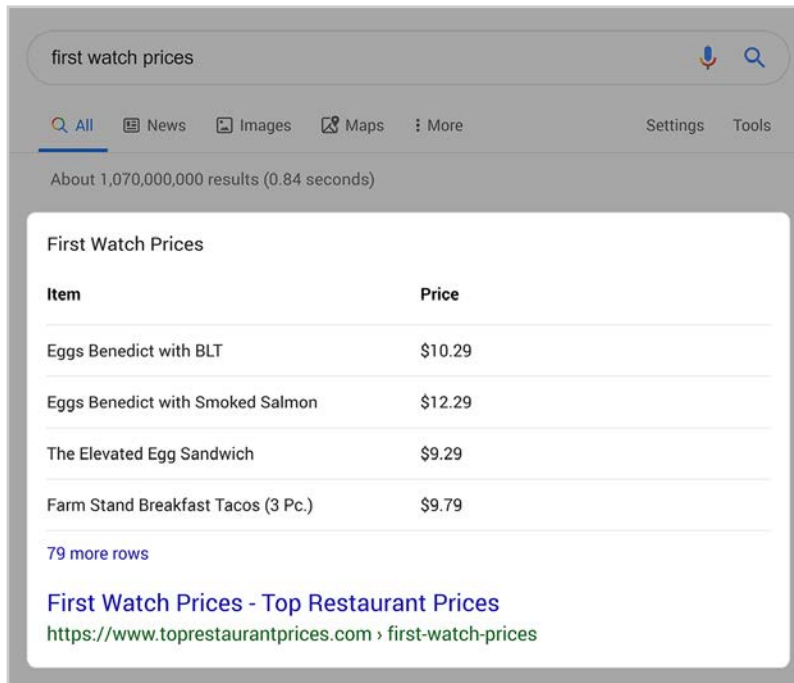
Google will pull those subheaders from your content... and include them in the Featured Snippet:



If you want to rank in Table Snippets...

You need to create a table that Google can easily pull data from.

For example, the content from this Table Snippet...



A screenshot of a Google search result for "first watch prices". The search bar shows the query and a microphone icon. Below the search bar are navigation tabs for "All", "News", "Images", "Maps", and "More", along with "Settings" and "Tools". The search results indicate "About 1,070,000,000 results (0.84 seconds)". A table snippet is displayed with the title "First Watch Prices". The table has two columns: "Item" and "Price". The items listed are "Eggs Benedict with BLT" (\$10.29), "Eggs Benedict with Smoked Salmon" (\$12.29), "The Elevated Egg Sandwich" (\$9.29), and "Farm Stand Breakfast Tacos (3 Pc.)" (\$9.79). Below the table, there is a link for "79 more rows" and a link to "First Watch Prices - Top Restaurant Prices" with the URL "https://www.toprestaurantprices.com › first-watch-prices".

Item	Price
Eggs Benedict with BLT	\$10.29
Eggs Benedict with Smoked Salmon	\$12.29
The Elevated Egg Sandwich	\$9.29
Farm Stand Breakfast Tacos (3 Pc.)	\$9.79

...is pulled directly from a well-formatted table.



A screenshot of a restaurant menu table. The table lists various items and their prices. The items are: "100% Pure Maple Syrup" (\$1.29), "Egg-Sclusives" (highlighted in a dark green box), "Chickichanga" (\$9.99), "Eggs Benedict Classic" (\$10.29), "Eggs Benedict Florentine" (\$10.29), "Eggs Benedict with BLT" (\$10.29), "Eggs Benedict with Smoked Salmon" (\$12.29), "The Elevated Egg Sandwich" (\$9.29), "Farm Stand Breakfast Tacos (3 Pc.)" (\$9.79), "Skillet Hash Farmhouse" (\$10.49), and "Skillet Hash Parma" (\$10.49).

100% Pure Maple Syrup	\$1.29
Egg-Sclusives	
Chickichanga	\$9.99
Eggs Benedict Classic	\$10.29
Eggs Benedict Florentine	\$10.29
Eggs Benedict with BLT	\$10.29
Eggs Benedict with Smoked Salmon	\$12.29
The Elevated Egg Sandwich	\$9.29
Farm Stand Breakfast Tacos (3 Pc.)	\$9.79
Skillet Hash Farmhouse	\$10.49
Skillet Hash Parma	\$10.49

Which leads us to our next topic...

CHAPTER 4:

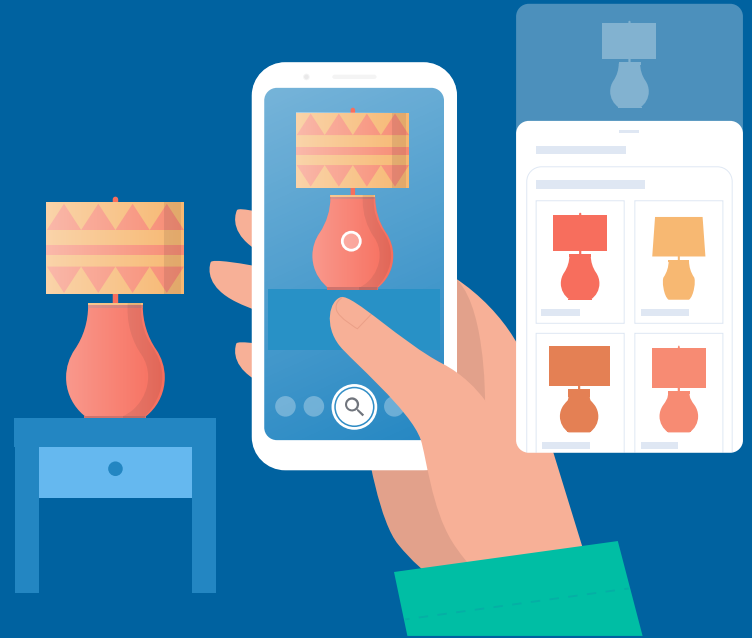
The Rise of Visual Search

Is Visual Search an SEO game changer?

Not yet.

But based on how things are trending, visual search is poised to take off in 2021.

Here's what you need to know.



Visual Search is Taking Off

More people are conducting more visual searches than ever before.

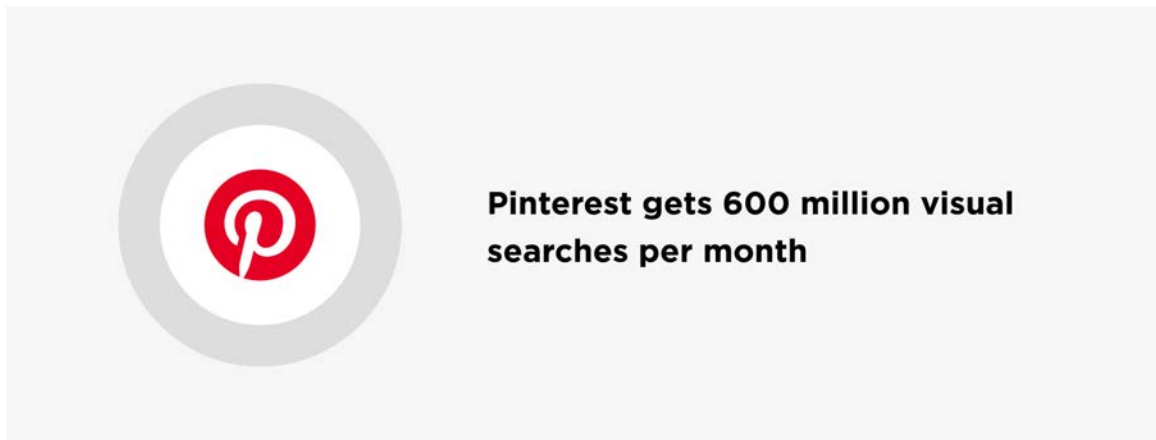
Just take a look at these stats:

Google Lens has already been used 1 billion times ([source](#)).

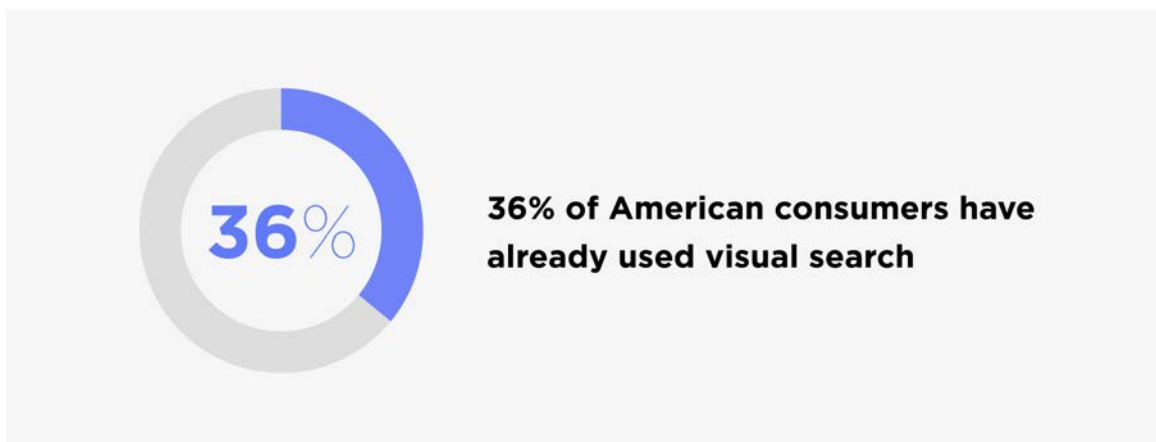


Google Lens has already been used 1 billion times

Pinterest gets 600 million visual searches per month ([source](#)).



36% of American consumers have already used visual search ([source](#)).



Visual Search Technology is Insanely Good

Visual search is still in its infancy.

And it already works REALLY well.

Don't believe me?

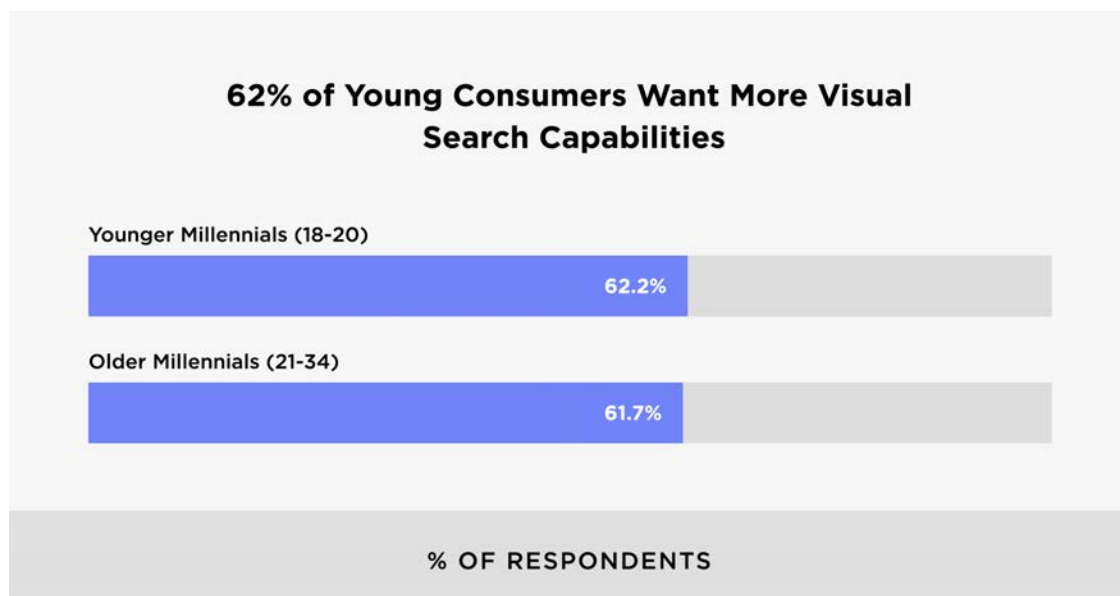
Whip open Google Lens on your mobile device and start scanning stuff around your room.

People WANT to Search With Images

Once you start using it, you'll quickly notice that visual search is super helpful for:

- Shopping
- Directions
- Identifying landmarks
- Local business reviews
- Translation
- Recipes
- Nutrition information
- Lots more

Which is probably why [62% of young consumers](#) want more visual search tech:



How to Optimize for Visual Search


Earlier this year we conducted one of the first visual search ranking factors studies.

BACKLINKO Home About Newsletter

640 shares

VISUAL SEARCH STUDY:

How Google Ranks Google Lens Results



by Brian Dean · Updated Jun. 09, 2020

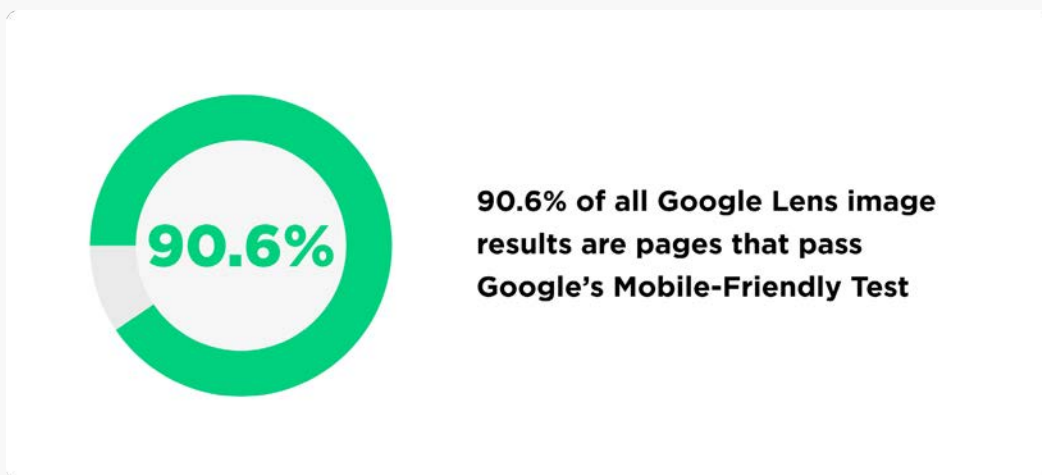
We analyzed 65,388 Google Lens search results to better understand how visual search works.

Specifically, we looked at potential ranking factors that Google may use in its Lens algorithm, including:

Here are some of the highlights from that research.

Mobile-Friendly Pages Have a Huge Edge

9 out of 10 Google Lens results came from a site that passed [Google's mobile-friendly test](#).

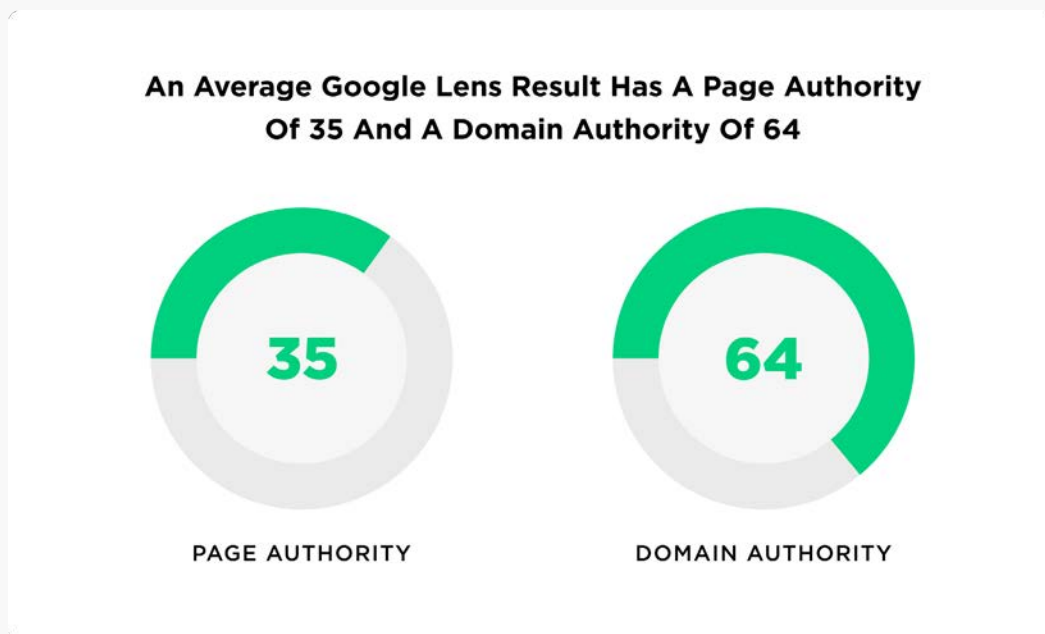


Considering that basically 100% of Google Lens searches are done on mobile devices, it makes sense that Google would prefer mobile-friendly websites.

Traditional Image SEO Still Applies

Our research found that traditional image SEO techniques (like optimizing image filenames and alt text) seems to also help with Google Lens rankings.

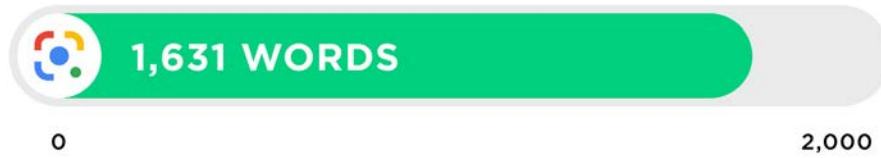
And that high-authority pages and sites are more likely to appear as Google Lens results.



Google Lens Results Tend to Come From Content-Rich Pages

We found that Google tends to pull Google Lens image results from pages with quite a bit of text (1600 words on average).

**The Average Word Count Of A Google Lens
Result Page Is 1,631 Words**



At first this may seem surprising. But when you realize that Google specifically states that the [text content on a page is important for image SEO](#), this finding makes a whole lot of sense.

CHAPTER 5:

Domain Authority 2.0

Domain Authority used to be all about links.

Not anymore.

Today, Google also evaluates your site based on **Expertise, Authoritativeness, and Trustworthiness**.

Also known as E-A-T.

In many ways, E-A-T is Domain Authority 2.0.

And in this chapter I'll cover everything you need to know about this important SEO trend.



The most recent set of [Google Quality Rater Guidelines](#) REALLY focused on E-A-T.

3.2 Expertise, Authoritativeness, and Trustworthiness (E-A-T)

Remember that the first step of PQ rating is to understand the true purpose of the page. Websites or pages without some sort of beneficial purpose, including pages that are created with no attempt to help users, or pages that potentially spread hate, cause harm, or misinform or deceive users, should receive the **Lowest** rating.

For all other pages that have a beneficial purpose, the amount of expertise, authoritativeness, and trustworthiness (E-A-T) is very important. Please consider:

- The expertise of the creator of the MC.
- The authoritativeness of the creator of the MC, the MC itself, and the website
- The trustworthiness of the creator of the MC, the MC itself, and the website.

Keep in mind that there are high E-A-T pages and websites of all types, even gossip websites, fashion websites, humor websites, forum and Q&A pages, etc. In fact, some types of information are found almost exclusively on forums and discussions.

To be clear:

E-A-T has been a part of the guidelines for years.

But E-A-T is now a more important ranking factor than before.

For example, Google's new "[How Search Works](#)" report mentions that they want to rank "reliable sources".

Quality of content

Beyond matching the words in your query with relevant documents on the web, Search algorithms also aim to prioritize the most **reliable sources** available. To do this, our systems are designed to identify signals that can help determine which pages demonstrate expertise, authoritativeness, and trustworthiness on a given topic.

They even cite E-A-T as a key ranking signal:

Quality of content

Beyond matching the words in your query with relevant documents on the web, Search algorithms also aim to prioritize the most reliable sources available. To do this, our systems are designed to identify signals that can help determine which pages demonstrate

expertise, authoritativeness, and trustworthiness on a given topic.

We look for sites that many users seem to value for similar queries. For example, if other prominent websites link to the page (what is known as [PageRank](#)), that has proven to be a good sign that the

Here's how to bump up your site's E-A-T.

Be An Expert (Or Hire One)

If you hire random freelancers to write your content, you're in trouble.

That's because Google wants to feature content that's written by legit experts in their field.

2.6 Reputation of the Website or

Creator of the Main Content

A website's reputation is based on the experience of real users, as well as the opinion of people who are experts in the topic of the website. Keep in mind that websites often represent real companies, organizations, and other entities. Therefore, reputation research applies to both the website and the actual company, organization, or entity that the website is representing.

A website's reputation can also help you understand what a website is

They even go as far to say that medical content needs to be written by health care professionals.

Keep in mind that there are high E-A-T pages and websites of all types, even gossip websites, fashion websites, humor websites, forum and Q&A pages, etc. In fact, some types of information are found almost exclusively on forums and discussions, where a community of experts can provide valuable perspectives on specific topics.

- High E-A-T medical advice should be written or produced by people or organizations with appropriate medical expertise or accreditation.

High E-A-T medical advice or information should be written or produced in a professional style and should be edited,

This is a tough thing to fake.

So if you want your content to rank in 2021, it needs to be written by people that know their stuff.

(Especially in the health niche.)

Be Transparent

Google probably focuses on **off-site** signals to figure out your site's E-A-T.

That said:

The rater guidelines spend a lot of time on evaluating the site itself.

For example, the guidelines point out that:

7.2.8 Inadequate Information about the Website or Creator of the Main Content

As discussed in [Section 2.5.3](#), we expect most websites to have some information about who (e.g., what individual, company, business, foundation, etc.) is responsible for the website and who created the MC, as well as some contact information, unless there is a good reason for anonymity. For websites with YMYL pages, such as online banks, we expect to find a lot of information about the site, including extensive customer service information.

This means having:

- Thorough about page
- Easy to find contact page
- References and external links to sources
- Privacy policy and terms of service
- Author bylines on every article

Get Cited

Most of Google's evaluation of E-A-T happens **off of your website**.

Which makes sense.

Any random person can claim to be an expert.

But getting other websites to agree with you?

That's a totally different story.

In fact, Google's guidelines state that:

Many websites are eager to tell users how great they are. Some webmasters have read these rating guidelines and write "reviews" on various review websites. But for Page Quality rating, you must also look for credible, independent information from sources outside the website.

When the website says one thing about itself, but reputable external sources disagree with what the website says, trust the external sources.

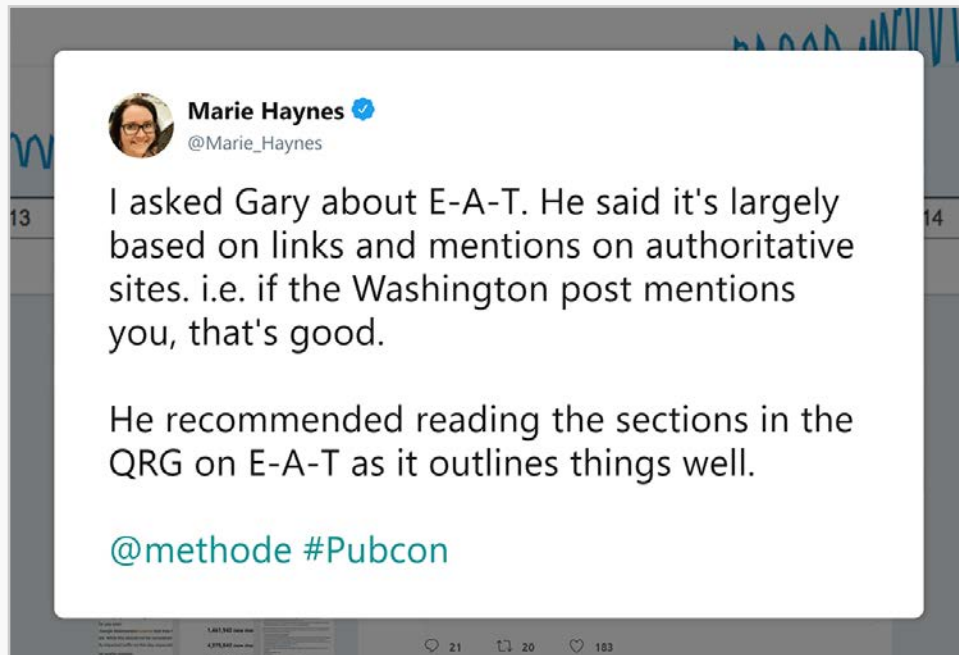
Your job is to truly evaluate the Page Quality of the site, not just blindly accept information on one or two pages of the website. Be skeptical of claims that websites make about themselves.

So:

Besides creating an awesome site, how do you get other people to mention you and your site as a go-to resource?

First, you need to be cited on lots of other trusted websites.

These don't even have to be linked mentions.



Something like this can help Google see you as an expert on a given topic:

Step-By-Step SEO: An Interview with Brian Dean

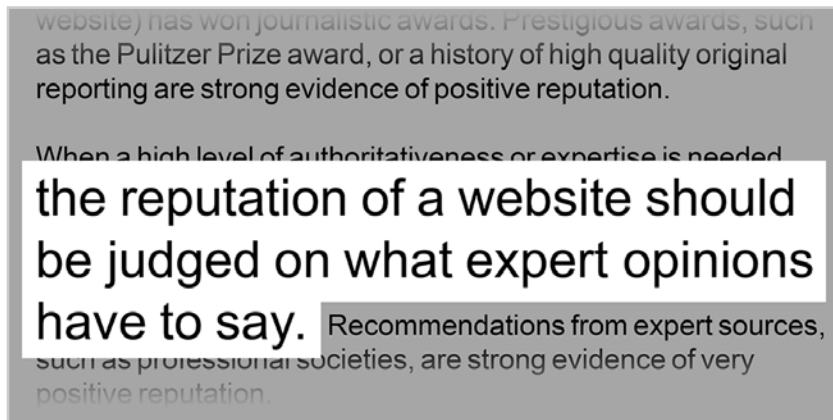
Step-By-Step SEO: An Interview with Brian D...
0:00 / ... 15

Brian Dean is an internationally recognized **SEO expert** who's worked with companies like Disney, Apple, and IBM.

He is the founder of Backlinko, an SEO blog launched in late 2012. Brian has grown Backlinko from 0 to over 180,000 visitors a month. In short, this guy knows how to get stuff ranked in Google.

Second, your site as a whole needs to be associated with a specific topic.

Again, this comes down to off-site mentions. Specifically, mentions from other authorities in your field.



For example, getting listed as the #1 SEO blog by Ahrefs probably boosted Backlinko's reputation in Google's eyes.

Now let's get to the results, shall we?

1. Backlinko

Founder: [Brian Dean](#)
Blog type: Single-author
Ahrefs Rank: [5,194](#)
Domain Rating (DR): [84](#)
Estimated monthly organic search traffic: [110,078](#)
Average posts per month: 5
Average post length: 3,401 words

Heard of the [Skyscraper Technique](#)? Then you're already familiar with Brian's work.

Backlinko is perhaps the most famous single-author SEO blog. Brian rarely publishes new content, but when he does, you'll certainly know about it. He doesn't do things by halves. His approach is quality over quantity.

CHAPTER 6:

Video Continues to Surge

Online video is EXPLODING right now.

In fact, according to Cisco, online video will make up 82% of all online traffic by 2022.

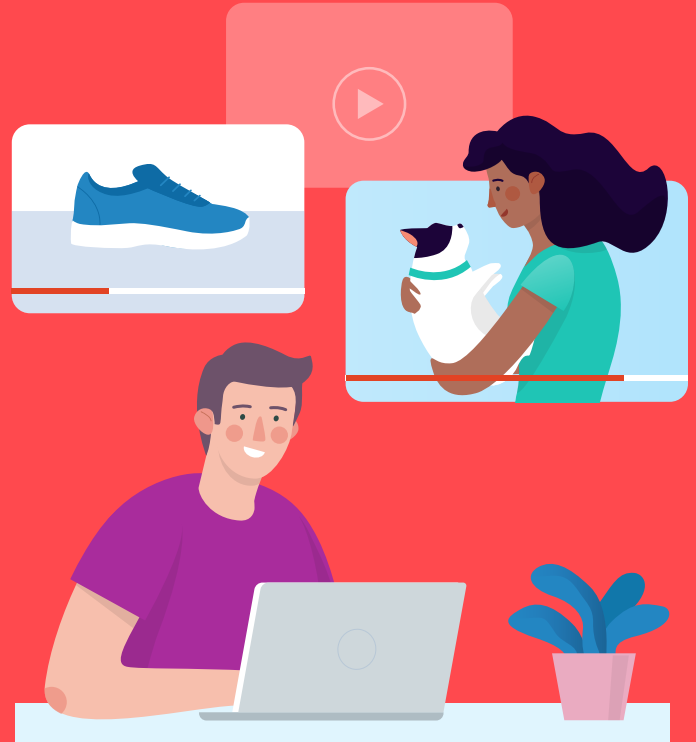
82%!

And that may still not satisfy the world's demand for video.

Despite the fact that there are more videos out there than ever, HubSpot states that 43% of people want even MORE video content.

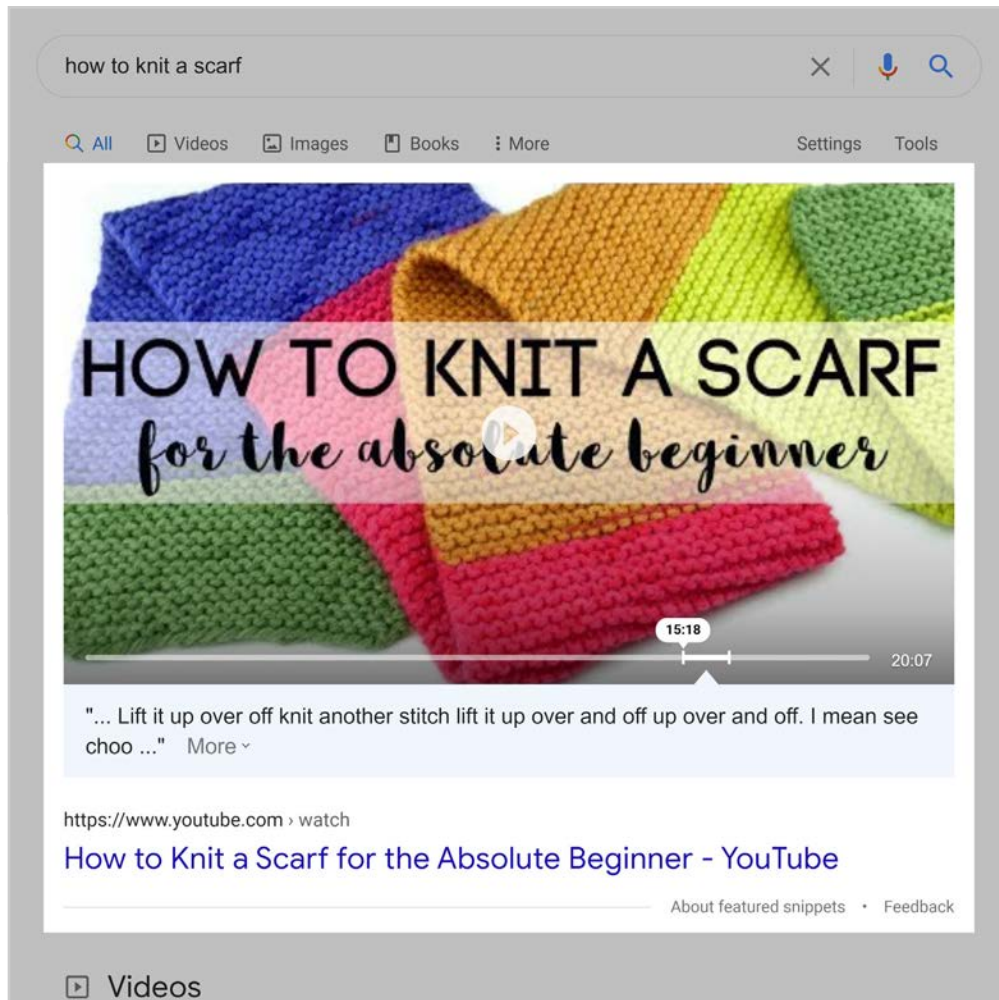
In short:

If video isn't part of your digital marketing plans, you're missing out. Here's how you can use video to improve your SEO this year.

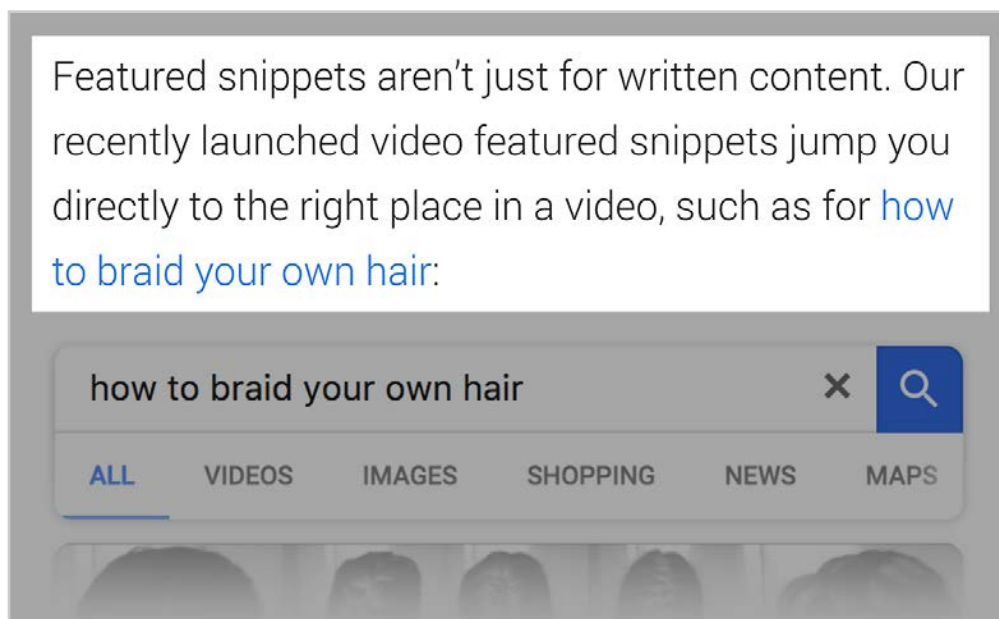


Video Featured Snippets

You've probably noticed more Video Featured Snippets in the search results.



In fact, Google highlighted Video Featured Snippets in their “[Reintroduction to Featured Snippets](#)” report.



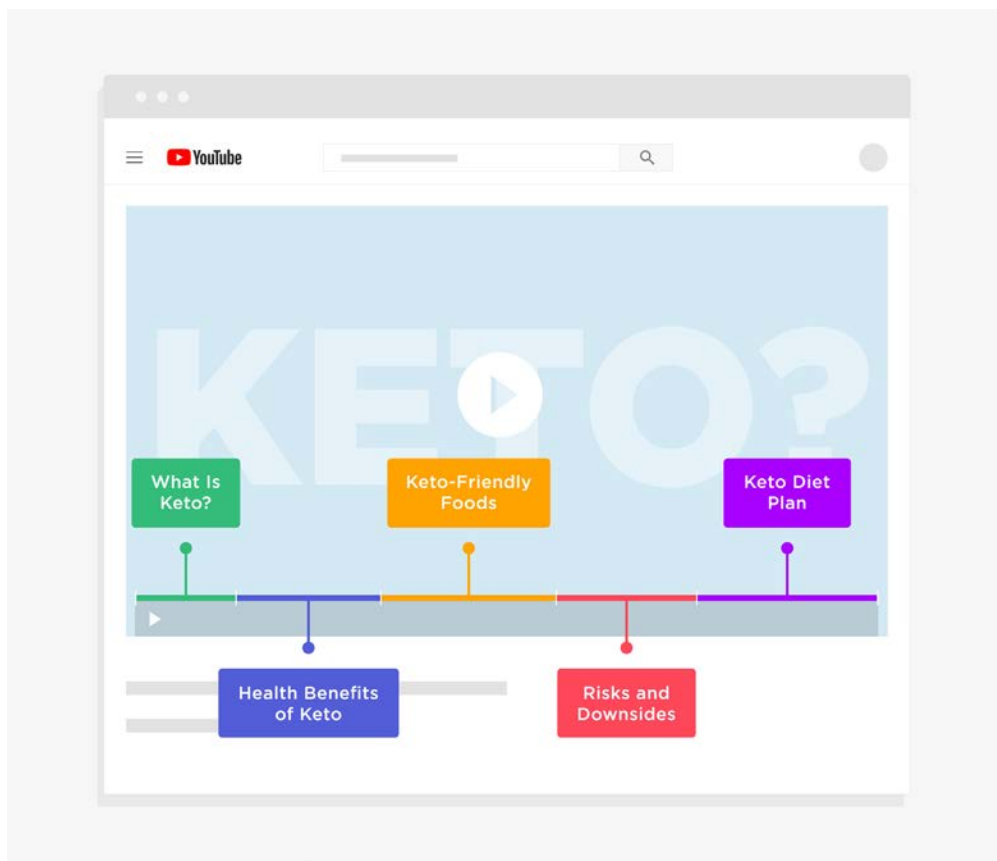
And I expect to see more of Video Featured Snippets in 2021.

From what I've seen, here are the 3 most important things to do to get your video content in a Featured Snippets.

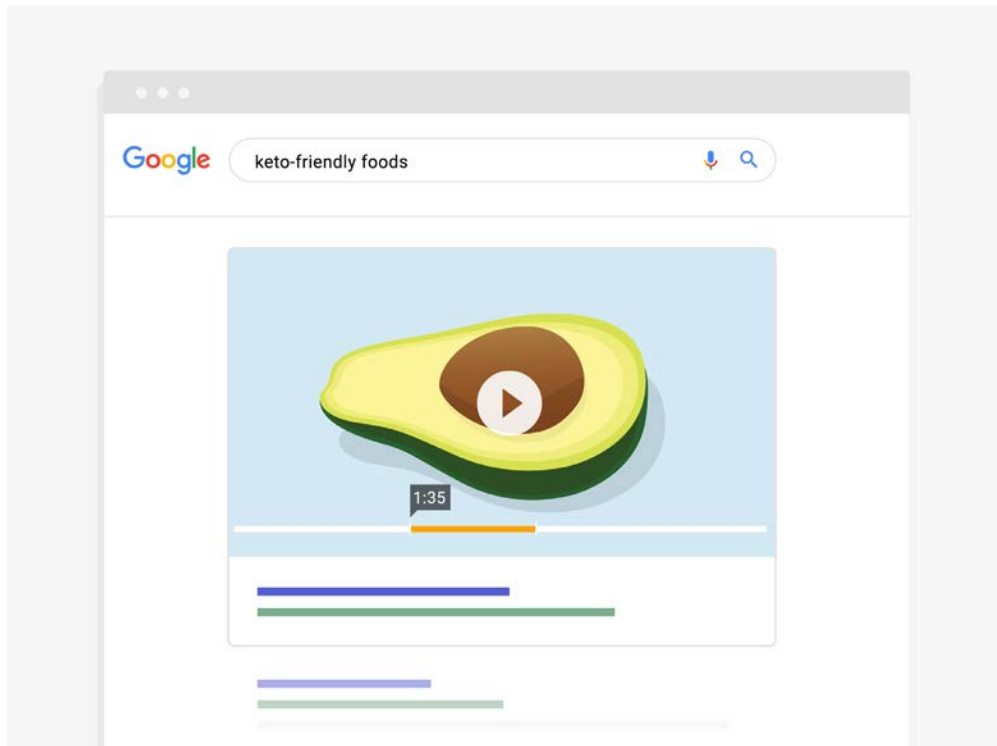
1. Organize Your Content Into Discrete Sections

This is huge.

Clear sections help Google understand the content in your video.

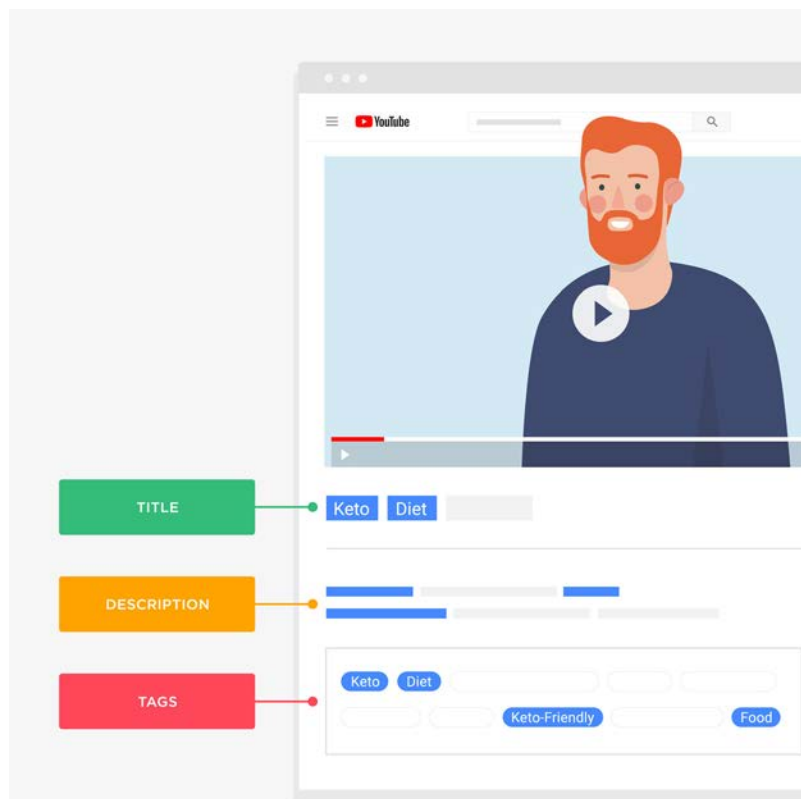


Which makes it easy for them to use different clips from your video in a snippet.



2. Optimize Your Video for SEO

Google uses your title, description and tags to figure out what your video is all about.



So besides publishing videos that have clear sections, you also want to make sure that [your video is optimized for SEO](#).

In fact, a small HubSpot study of 165 Video Featured Snippets found that [80% of them contained a keyword in the title](#).

3. Provide a Transcript

The captions that YouTube automatically generates are REALLY good.



But it's not 100%.

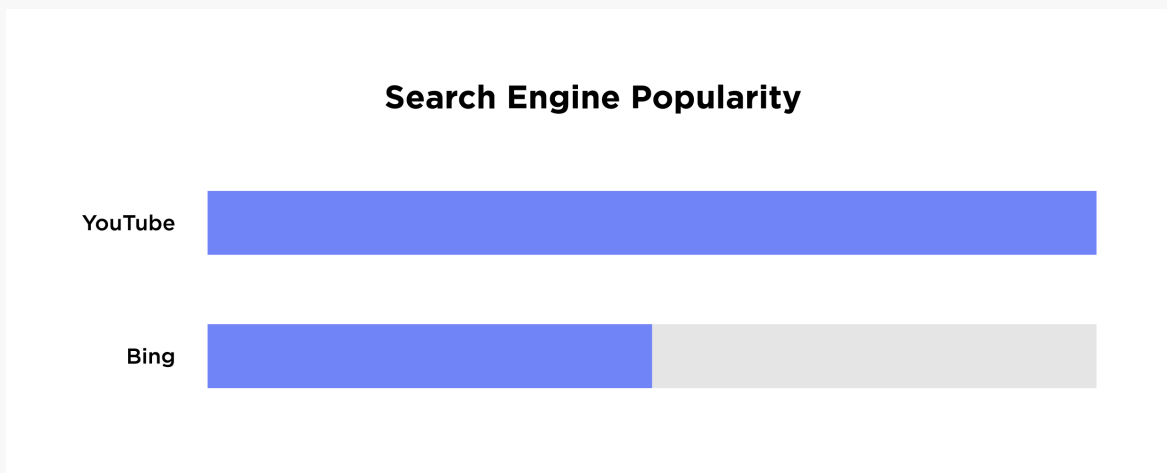


So to increase the odds that YouTube and Google can understand every word of your video, upload a transcript.

Grow Your YouTube Channel

YouTube is already the world's 2nd largest search engine.

(In fact, according to a study by JumpShot and Moz founder Rand Fishkin, YouTube's search engine is [2x more popular than Bing](#))



Amazingly, YouTube [is still growing](#).

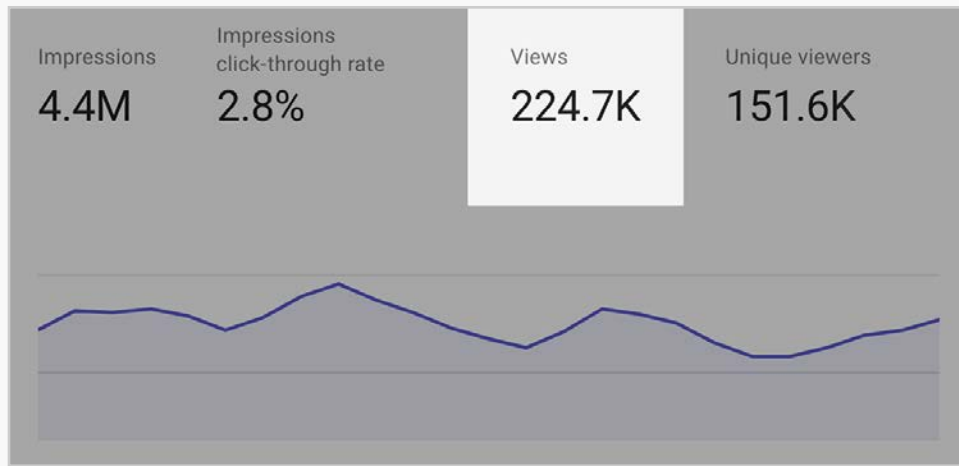
In short, more and more people are searching for stuff on YouTube than ever before.

So if you want to get more traffic from SEO in 2021, I recommend creating and optimizing content specifically for YouTube.

It's a search engine that's too big to ignore.

The best part? Most marketers are too lazy to make videos. So it's pretty easy to get your videos seen (assuming you know how to create high-quality videos).

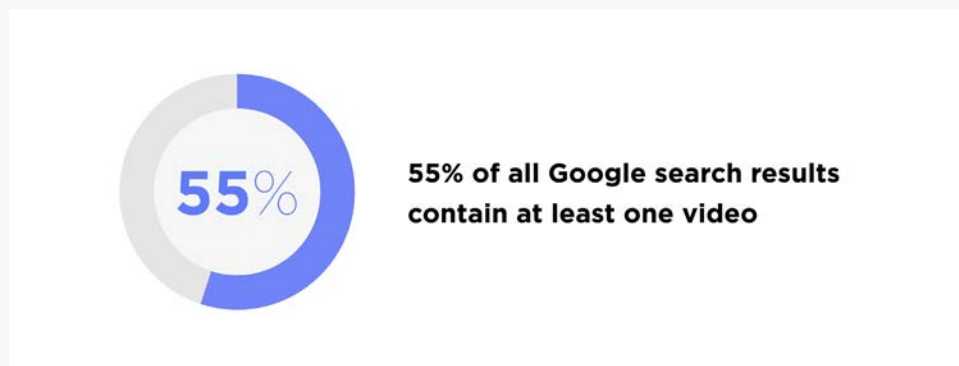
For example, my channel has 39 total videos. And those 39 videos generate over 228k views per month.



(And as you might expect, a good chunk of those viewers turn into website visitors, leads and customers).

It gets better: when you publish SEO-optimized YouTube videos, you'll own more Google real estate.

Why? Well, for starters: [55% of all Google search results](#) contain at least one video.



(And almost all of those videos are from YouTube).

Here's an example of what I mean:

seo tutorial



All Videos Books News Images More Settings Tools

About 62,300,000 results (0.79 seconds)



"... Research your competitors and dominate your niche. This tutorial is called SEO for beginners because ..." More

https://www.youtube.com/watch

SEO For Beginners: A Basic Search Engine Optimization ...

About featured snippets Feedback

https://moz.com/beginners-guide-to-seo

Beginner's Guide to SEO [Search Engine Optimization] - ...

Introduction. Welcome to your SEO learning journey! You'll get the most out of this guide if your desire to learn search engine ...

Videos



SEO Tutorial For Beginners | SEO Full Course | Search ...

YouTube · Simplilearn
Nov 19, 2019



SEO Tutorial for Beginners 2020 - Simple Search Engine ...

YouTube · Surfside PPC
Jun 16, 2020



SEO Tutorial For Beginners | Learn SEO Step By Step | SEO ...

YouTube · Simplilearn
Jan 11, 2019



SEO Tutorial for Beginners - Step by Step Guide 2020! (+ ...

YouTube · Hogan Chua
Jul 31, 2018

Feedback



View all

https://ahrefs.com/blog/seo-tutorial

A Simple 7-Step SEO Tutorial for Beginners - Ahrefs

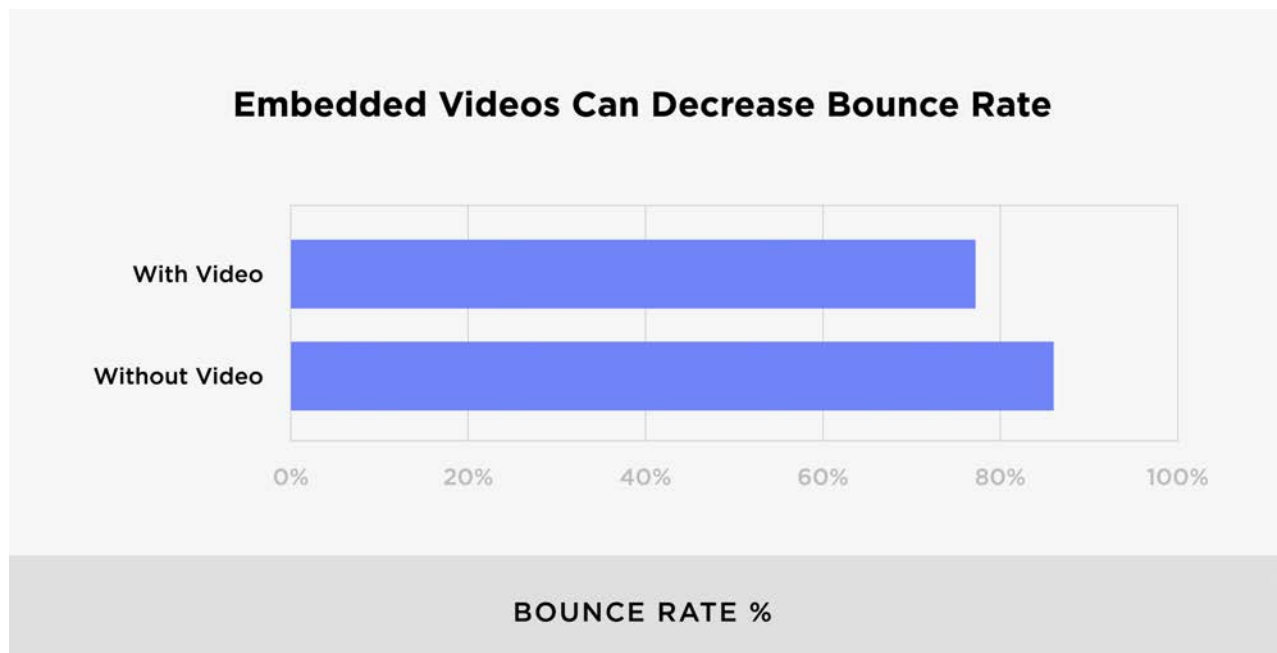
Jul 16, 2020 — More videos on YouTube · 1. Understand what keywords people are searching for · 2. Create content that searchers want to see · 3. Get clicks ...

And considering that Google owns YouTube, expect even MORE YouTube videos in the search results in 2021.

Embed Video Content Into Text-Based Blog Posts

If people want to see more video content, why not give it to them?

That's why I recommend embedding video content into your blog posts. And from my own Google Analytics data, I've seen that this can significantly improve [your bounce rate](#).



Here's an example of this in action:

...it has a good chance of cracking the top 5.

Then, optimize your page with the strategies in this video.



Now:

If you're REALLY pressed for time and don't have time to implement everything from the video, focus on these 5 strategies:

CHAPTER 6:

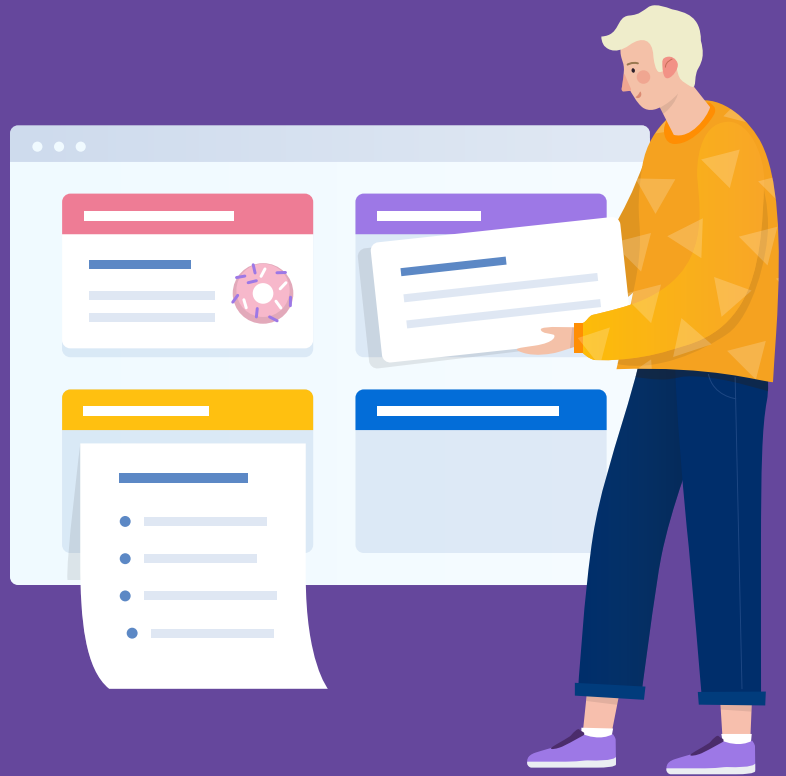
Master Search Intent

Search Intent was a massive topic in the SEO world in 2019.

And for good reason:

Content that doesn't match search intent simply won't rank.

And as Google gets better at giving people the exact search results they want, creating content that's a 1:1 Search Intent match is going to be a must for 2021 SEO.



Identify Each Keyword's Intent

Every keyword has an intent behind it.

Maybe it's to look something up.

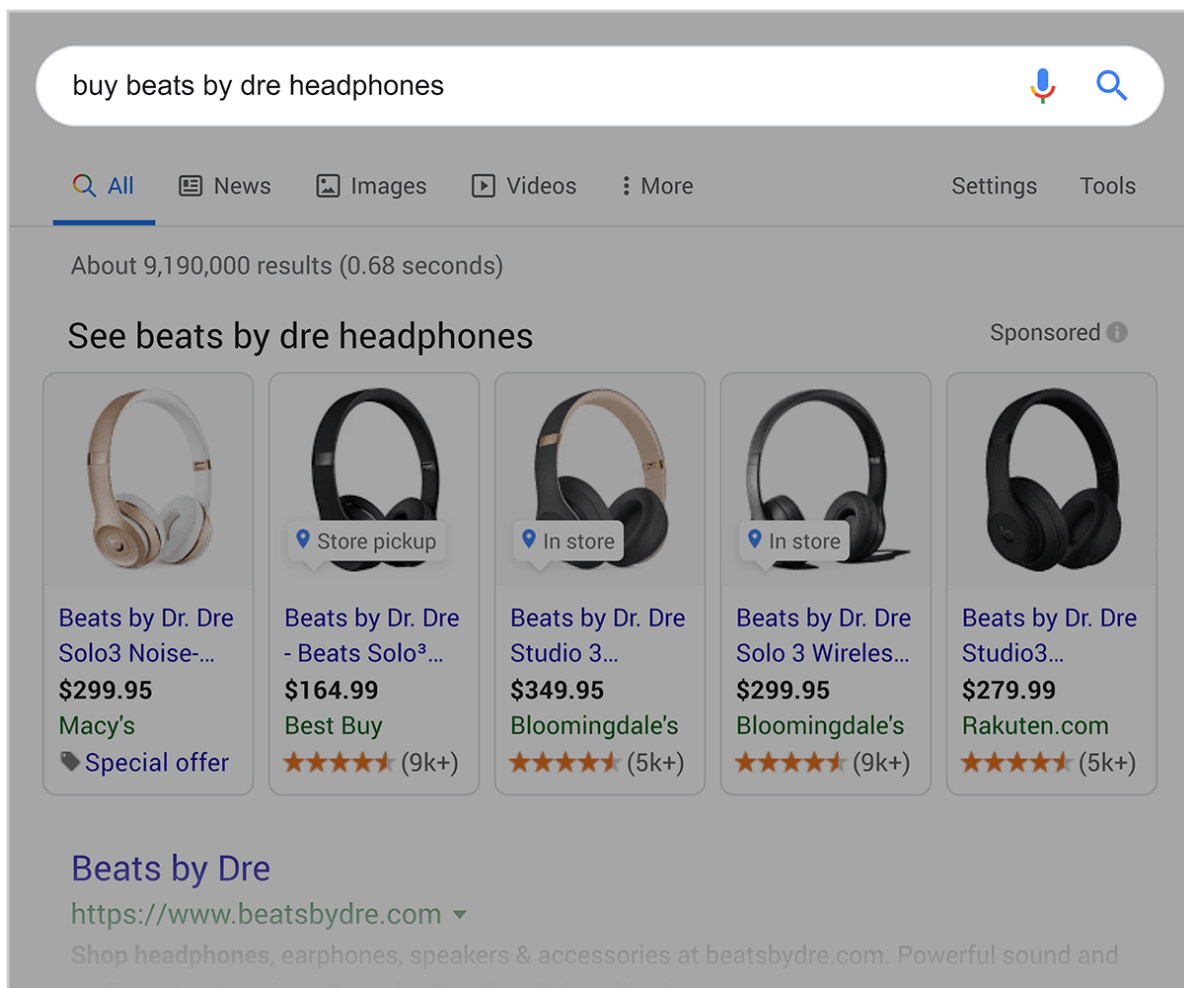
Or buy something.

Or compare product A with product B.

And the better your content can match that search intent, the better it will rank.

So your first step is to figure out your target keyword's Search Intent.

Sometimes the intent is right in the keyword.



But it's not usually that obvious. So for most keywords, the search results will tell you everything you need to know about that keyword's Search Intent.

For example, take a keyword like: "protein powder".

Someone searching for that term could want to buy some protein. Or maybe they want to learn more about it.

Well, according to Google's first page for that keyword, most people searching for "protein powder" are looking for **information**.

protein powder



All

Images

News

Videos

More

Settings

Tools

About 230,000,000 results (0.82 seconds)

The 7 Best Types of Protein Powder - Healthline

<https://www.healthline.com> › [nutrition](#) › [best-protein-powder](#) ▼

Oct 23, 2018 - **Protein powders** are very popular among health-conscious people. There are numerous types of **protein powder** made from a wide variety of ...

[The 6 Best Protein Powders for ...](#) · [The 7 Best Protein Powders for ...](#)

Protein Powder: What You Should Know - WebMD

<https://www.webmd.com> › [Vitamins and Supplements](#) › [Feature Stories](#) ▼

Dec 14, 2016 - Should you add a protein shake to your diet? Get the facts on whey, soy, and other **protein powders**.

The hidden dangers of protein powders - Harvard Health

<https://www.health.harvard.edu> › [staying-healthy](#) › [the-hidden-dangers-of-...](#) ▼

Sep 1, 2018 - **Protein powder** supplements can harbor health risks. They may have hidden unhealthy ingredients, such as added sugars and too many ...

Department | Whey Protein | GNC - GNC.com

<https://www.gnc.com> › [protein](#) › [whey-protein](#) ▼

For post workout recovery, try a whey **protein** isolate **powder** or shake from GNC. We offer popular brands like Optimum Nutrition to help support your goals.

[AboutTime® Whey Protein ...](#) · [GHOST® 100% Whey Protein](#) · [Espresso](#) · [Unflavored](#)

Health benefits of protein powder - Medical News Today

<https://www.medicalnewstoday.com> › [articles](#) ▼

Sep 18, 2018 - People can use **protein powder** to supplement their protein intake, help build muscle, aid muscle recovery, and encourage healthy weight loss.

Best protein powder for weight loss: Options for different diets

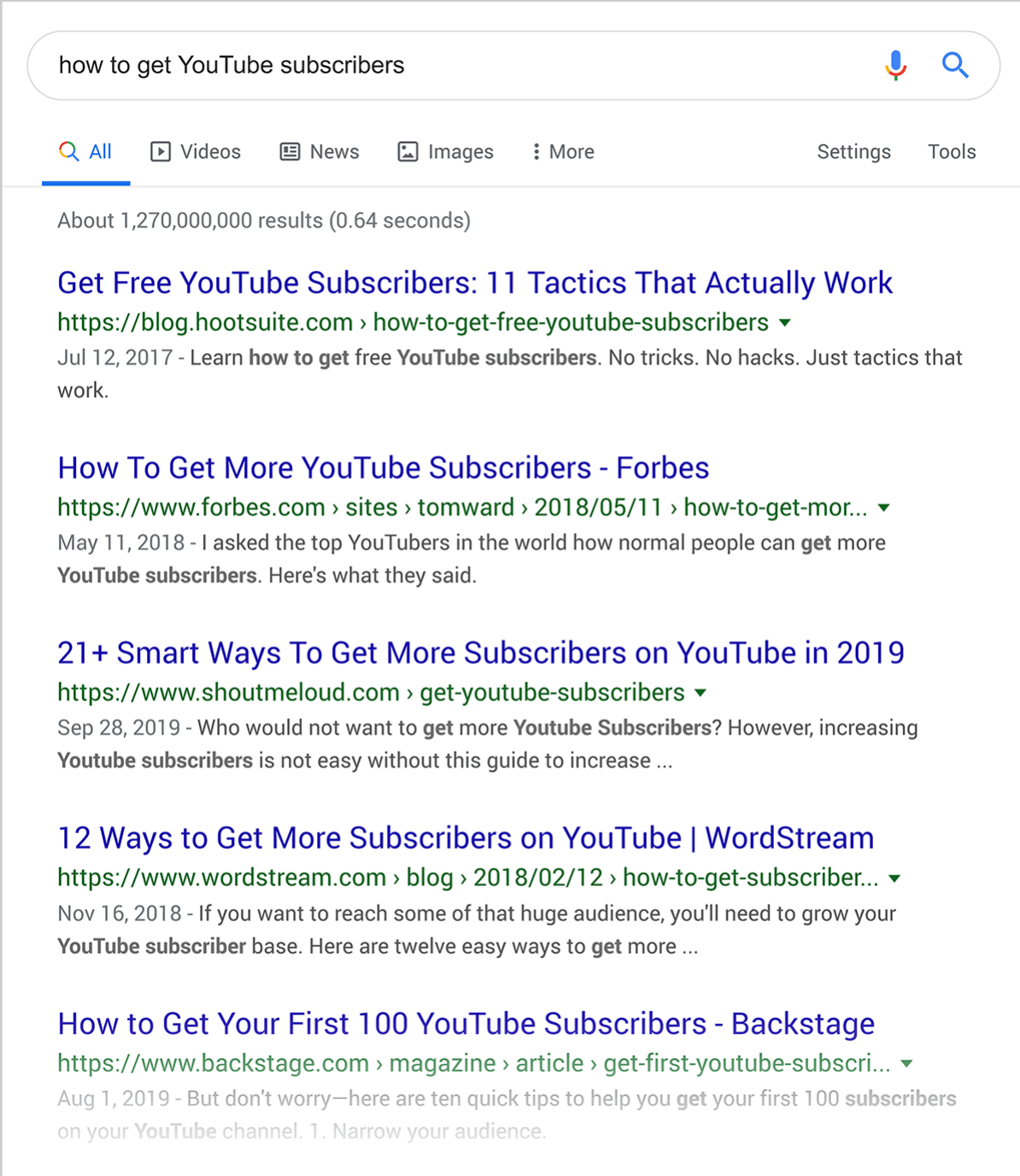
<https://www.medicalnewstoday.com> › [articles](#) ▼

Oct 1, 2019 - Research suggests that some **protein powders** may support weight loss. We look at the best options, depending on a person's diet. We also ...

Create Content That's a 1:1 Search Intent Match

Now that you've identified Search Intent, it's time to publish something that gives searchers EXACTLY what they're looking for.

For example, when I analyzed the search engine results pages (“[the SERPs](#)”) for “how to get YouTube subscribers”, I noticed that they were mostly list posts.

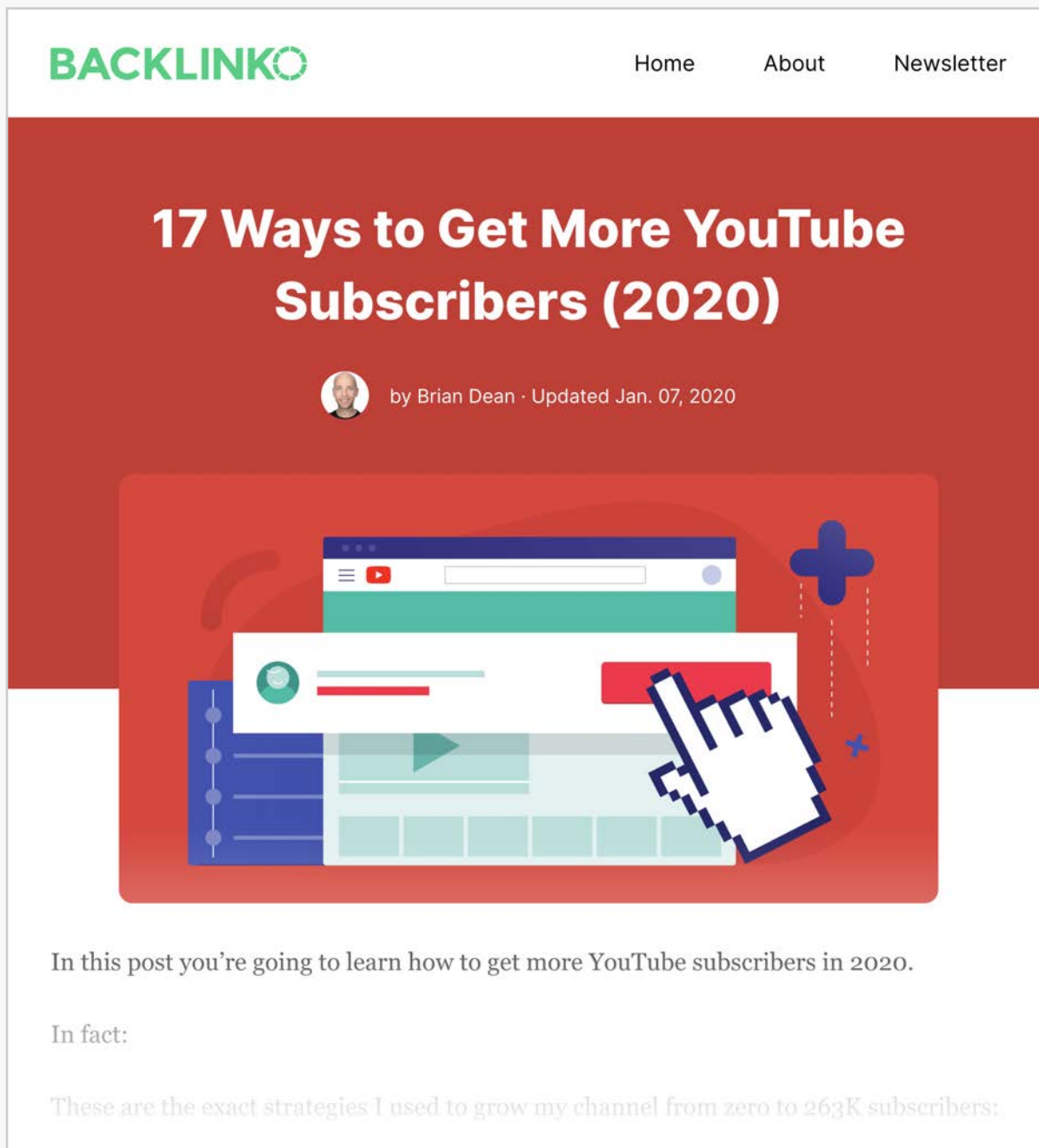


The screenshot shows a Google search for "how to get YouTube subscribers". The search bar at the top contains the query and a magnifying glass icon. Below the search bar, there are navigation tabs for "All", "Videos", "News", "Images", and "More", with "All" selected. To the right of these tabs are "Settings" and "Tools" links. The search results are displayed below, showing approximately 1,270,000,000 results in 0.64 seconds. The first five results are listed, each with a blue title, a green URL, and a brief description. The results are:

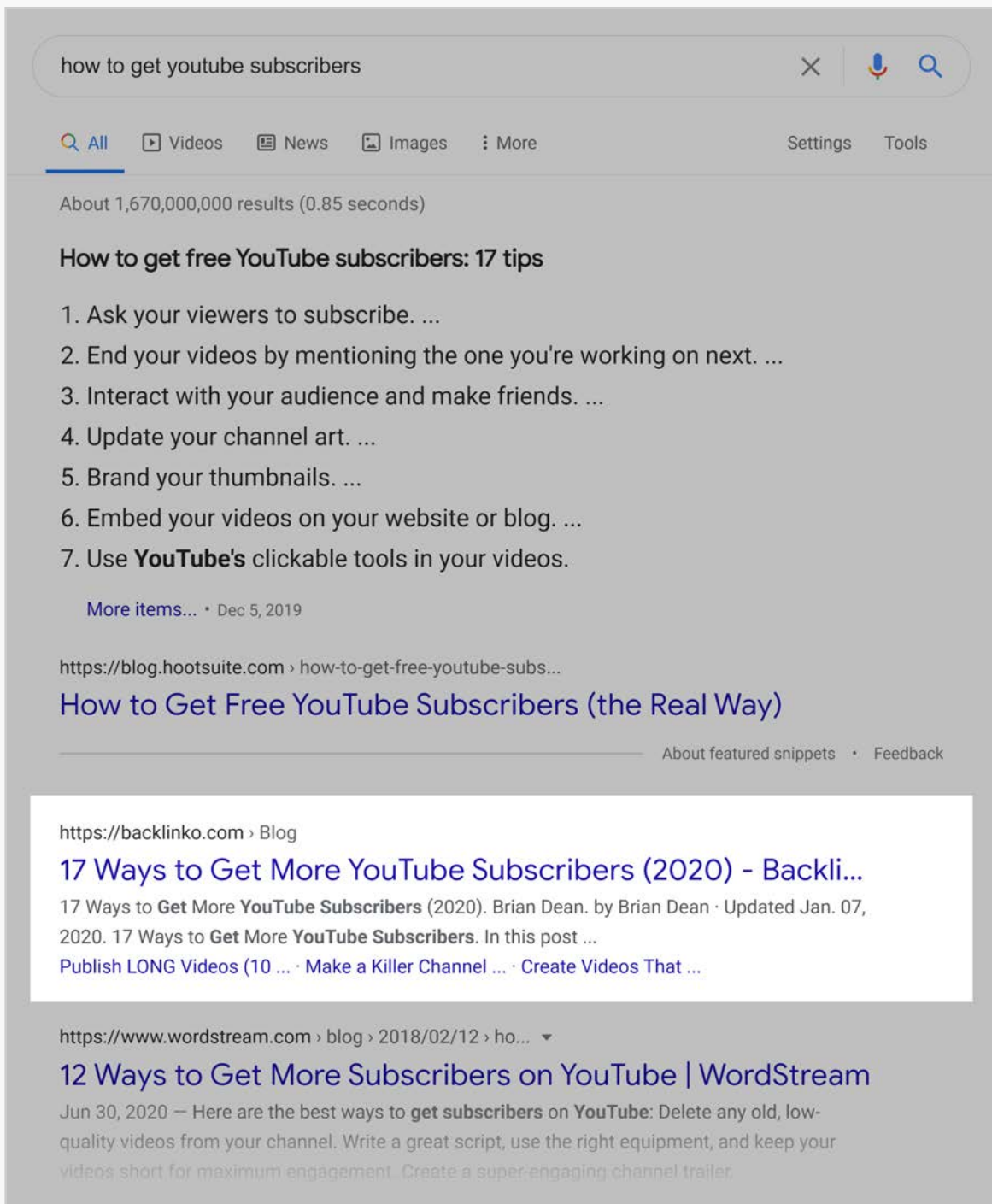
- Get Free YouTube Subscribers: 11 Tactics That Actually Work**
[https://blog.hootsuite.com > how-to-get-free-youtube-subscribers](https://blog.hootsuite.com/how-to-get-free-youtube-subscribers) ▼
Jul 12, 2017 - Learn **how to get free YouTube subscribers**. No tricks. No hacks. Just tactics that work.
- How To Get More YouTube Subscribers - Forbes**
[https://www.forbes.com > sites > tomward > 2018/05/11 > how-to-get-mor...](https://www.forbes.com/sites/tomward/2018/05/11/how-to-get-mor...) ▼
May 11, 2018 - I asked the top YouTubers in the world how normal people can **get more YouTube subscribers**. Here's what they said.
- 21+ Smart Ways To Get More Subscribers on YouTube in 2019**
[https://www.shoutmeloud.com > get-youtube-subscribers](https://www.shoutmeloud.com/get-youtube-subscribers) ▼
Sep 28, 2019 - Who would not want to **get more Youtube Subscribers**? However, increasing **Youtube subscribers** is not easy without this guide to increase ...
- 12 Ways to Get More Subscribers on YouTube | WordStream**
[https://www.wordstream.com > blog > 2018/02/12 > how-to-get-subscriber...](https://www.wordstream.com/blog/2018/02/12/how-to-get-subscriber...) ▼
Nov 16, 2018 - If you want to reach some of that huge audience, you'll need to grow your **YouTube subscriber** base. Here are twelve easy ways to **get more** ...
- How to Get Your First 100 YouTube Subscribers - Backstage**
[https://www.backstage.com > magazine > article > get-first-youtube-subscri...](https://www.backstage.com/magazine/article/get-first-youtube-subscri...) ▼
Aug 1, 2019 - But don't worry—here are ten quick tips to help you **get your first 100 subscribers** on your **YouTube** channel. 1. Narrow your audience.

So even though this was a “how to” keyword, I didn’t publish a step-by-step tutorial.

Instead, I published a list post.



And because my content is what users want, that page ranks in the top 3 for that keyword.



Re-Optimize Old Content for Search Intent

Search Intent optimization isn't just for new content.

You can tweak your older stuff to make it a better Search Intent fit. To boost your [on-page SEO](#). Or just to improve the page's overall user experience.

For example, [this post](#) used to rank really well for “SEO campaign”.

BACKLINKO Home About Contact Proven SEO Tips

SEO Campaign Case Study: 1,117 Social Shares and 15% More Organic Traffic (In 2 Weeks)

by Brian Dean | Last updated Nov. 19, 2015

“If we’re going to make this a success, we have to put a spin on it and make something different.”

-Mike Bonadio, star of today’s case study

As you’re about to see, Mike used Guestographics to create and promote a piece of content that generated:

- Over 1,000 social shares
- 12 white hat backlinks
- A mention in a highly-respected newspaper
- 15.15% boost in organic traffic

The best part?

GET EXCLUSIVE TIPS

Learn how to get more traffic with exclusive tips and insights that I only share with my private newsletter subscribers.

Enter Your Email

SIGN UP!

“When it comes to link building, Brian Dean is the best in the business.”

- Neil Patel, Quicksprout

HELPFUL RESOURCES

HOW TO

But as Google got better at figuring out what people that searched for that keyword actually wanted, my post started to drop in the rankings.

Which made sense: someone searching for “SEO campaign” doesn’t want a case study about a random guy. They want a list of steps.

So I transformed that post into a step-by-step guide that was easy to follow.

The best part?



You’re going to see LOTS of real life examples of these steps in action.

Let’s dive right in...

- **Step #1: Find Keywords**
- **Step #2: Publish Awesome Content**
- **Step #3: On-Site Optimization**
- **Step #4: Build Backlinks**
- **Step #5: Track Results**
- **Bonus Step #1: Prune “Zombie Pages”**
- **Bonus Step #2: Optimize for RankBrain**

About The Author

Today, that page gets 156.46% more organic traffic than the old version.

Acquisition	
Landing Page ?	156.46%  536 vs 209
Organic Traffic	% New Sessions ?
	13.51%  45.52% vs 52.63%
1. /seo-campaign	
Jul 27, 2020 - Aug 25, 2020	536 (100.00%)
Aug 2, 2018 - Aug 31, 2018	209 (100.00%)
% Change	156.46%
	-13.51%

CHAPTER 7:

Combat Decreasing CTRs

There's no denying it:

Organic click-through-rate is down.
Way down.

In fact, one industry study found that organic CTR on mobile search is down 41.4% since 2015.

It's no secret why: Google is crowding out the organic search results with SERP Features, like Answer Boxes, Ads, Carousels, "People also ask" sections, and more.

And to stand out in the SERPs, your result needs to scream "click on me!"... or else it'll be ignored.



Include Your Keyword in Your URL

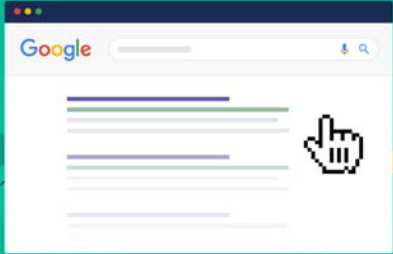
In 2019, we published the results from [our large-scale organic CTR study](#).

BACKLINKO Home About Newsletter

WE ANALYZED 5 MILLION GOOGLE SEARCH RESULTS

6461 shares

Here's What We Learned About Organic Click Through Rate

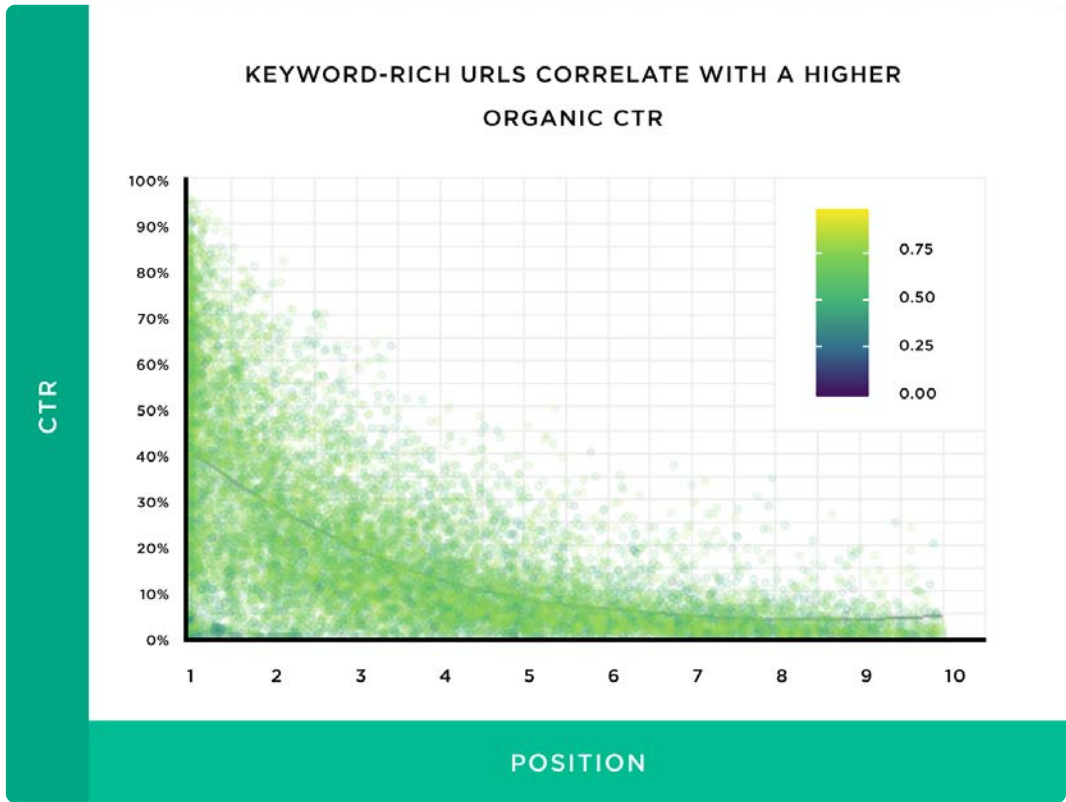


by Brian Dean · Updated Aug. 27, 2019

We analyzed 5 million Google search results to better understand organic click through rate.

First, we analyzed CTR data across 874,929 pages and 5,079,491 search queries.

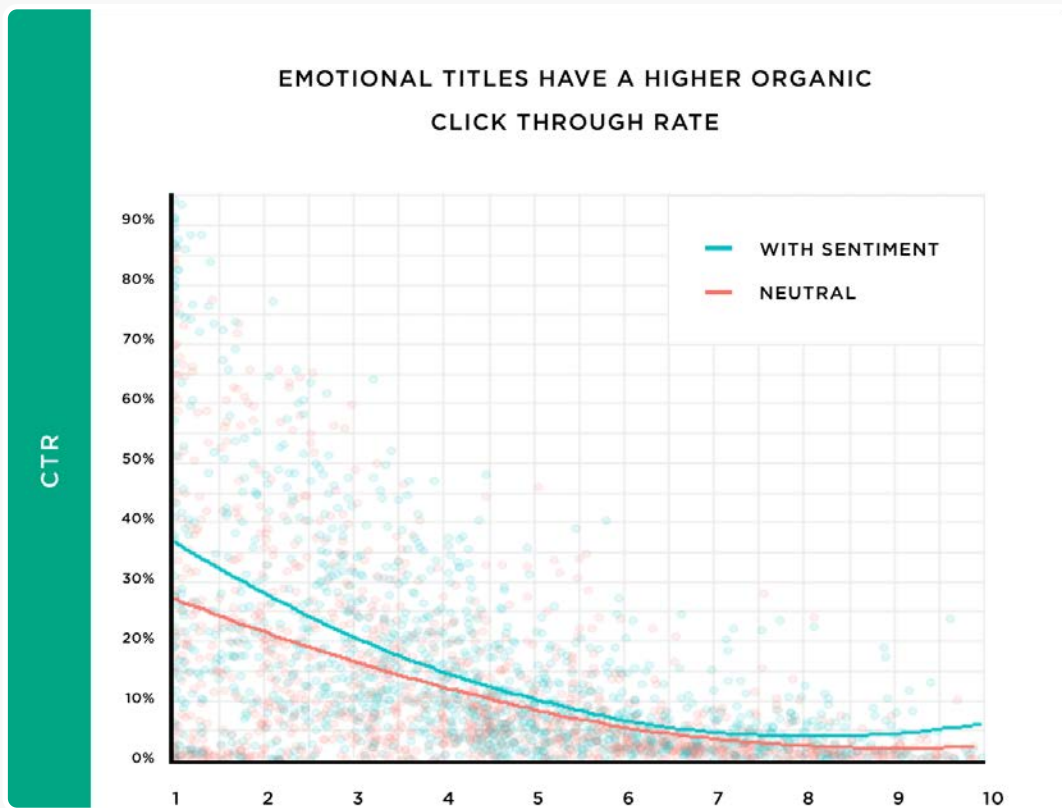
And one of our most interesting findings was that keyword-rich URLs get 45% more clicks vs. URLs that don't contain a keyword that matches the person's search.



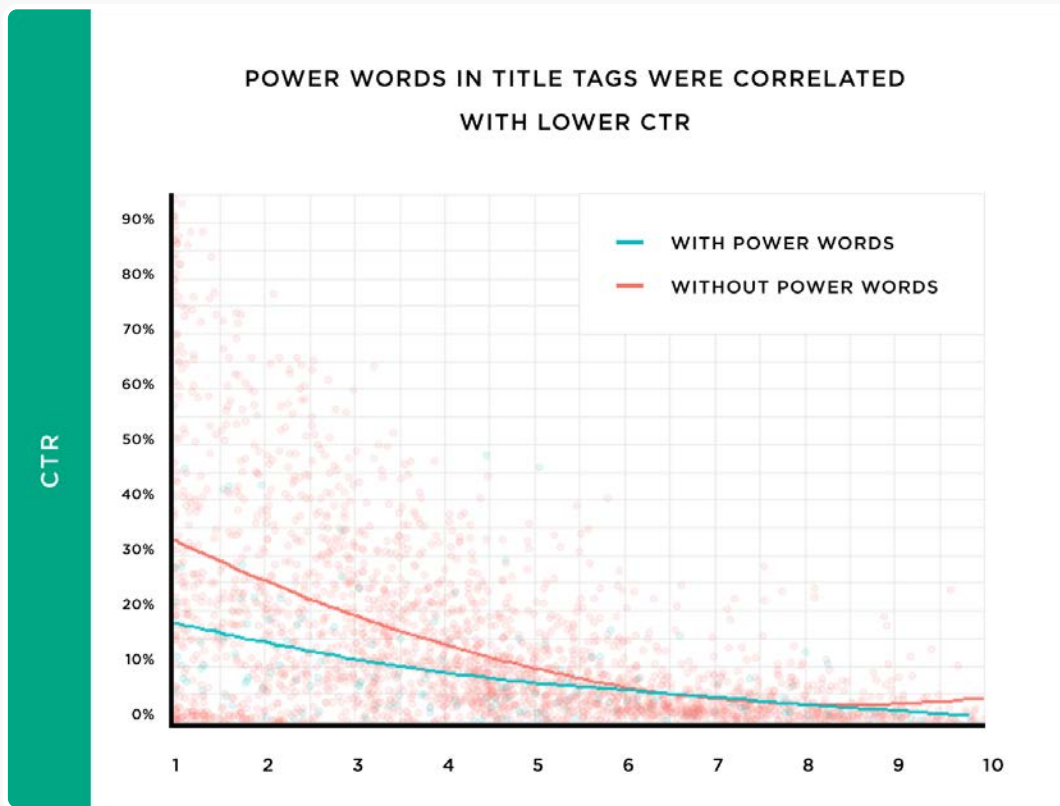
It looks like Google searchers want to click on compelling titles. But if a title veers into clickbait territory, they're going to click on something else.

Use Emotion (Without Going Overboard)

Our study found that emotional titles had a relatively high CTR.



But we also found that title tags that contained “Power Words” reduced clicks by 14%.



It looks like Google searchers want to click on compelling titles. But if a title veers into clickbait territory, they're going to click on something else.

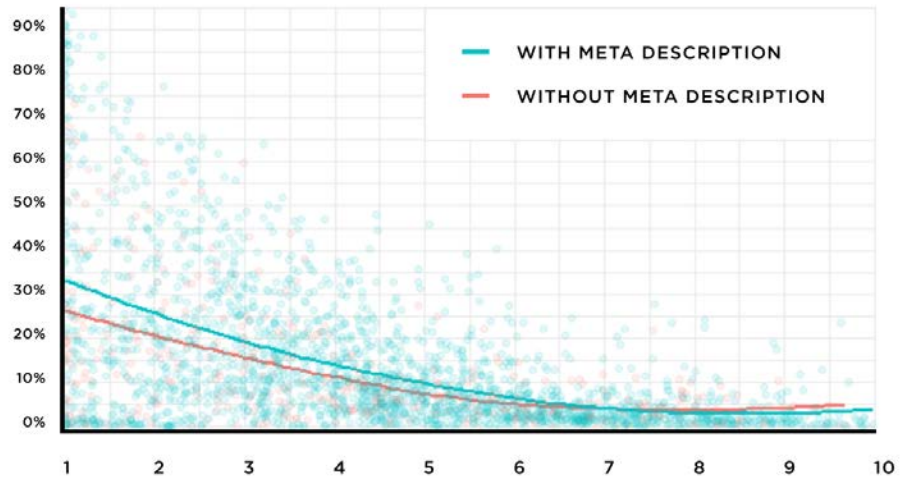
Write Meta Descriptions for Every Page

In other words: make sure your website's description meta tags are 100% original. And would compel someone to click on your site in the search results.

This is a simple 2-minute step that can increase your CTR by approximately 6%.

PAGES WITH A META DESCRIPTION HAVE A HIGHER AVERAGE CTR VS. PAGES WITHOUT A DESCRIPTION

CTR



POSITION

BONUS CHAPTER:

Quick SEO Tips for 2021

In this chapter I'll show you a few quick win tactics that are working great right now.

And should work even better in 2021.



Publish “Research Content”

Bloggers and journalists LOVE data.

And if you can hook them up with a stat, a survey, or an industry study, they'll link to you like there's no tomorrow.

For example, in 2020 we published 5 pieces of Research Content.

VISUAL SEARCH STUDY:

How Google Ranks Google Lens Results

640 shares
Twitter
Facebook



WE ANALYZED 11.8 MILLION GOOGLE SEARCH RESULTS

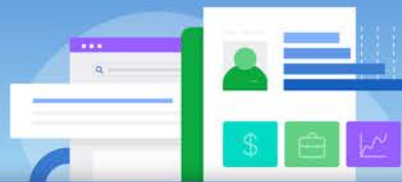
Here's What We Learned About SEO

14,206 shares
Twitter
Facebook



The 2020 SEO Jobs Report

3794 shares
Twitter
Facebook



LARGE SCALE STUDY

How Data From Popular Keyword Research Tools Compare

2909 shares
Twitter
Facebook



How People Use Google Search (New User Behavior Study)

1668 shares
Twitter
Facebook



And those 5 pieces of content brought in 22,926 backlinks, 23,217 social media shares and 262,983 thousand visitors.

Insane.

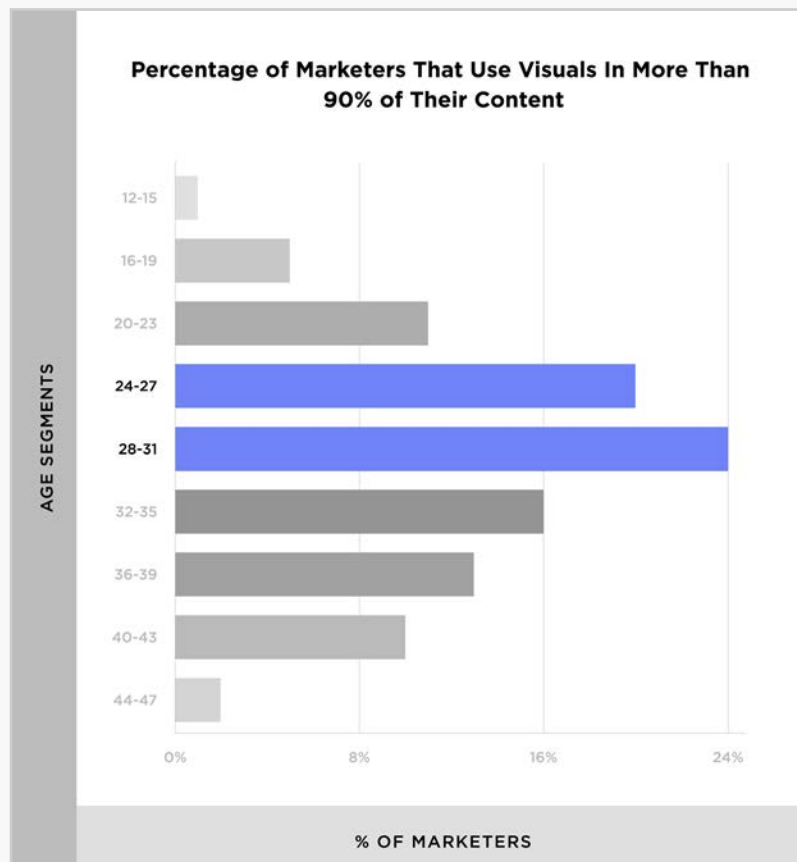
The downside of Research Content is that it's A LOT more work than banging out a list post or case study.

But when done right, the extra effort can totally pay off.

Create Visual Content (Especially “Concept Visuals”)

Just like video, visual content is growing fast.

In fact, a recent survey found that [87.5% of marketers](#) use visual content in the majority of their content marketing efforts.



And thanks to social media sites like Pinterest and Instagram, visual content should continue to see growth in 2021.

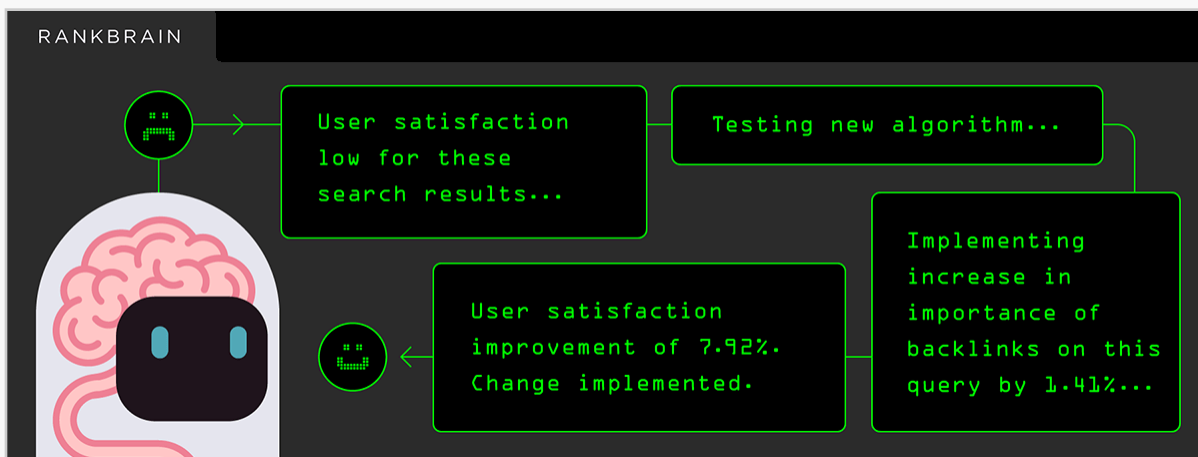
How can you take advantage of this trend?

Create more visual content... especially “Concept Visuals”.

In my experience, “Concept Visuals” can do just as well as a fancy infographic... if not better.

(Concept Visuals are images that are easy for other sites to embed into their content. When they do, they’ll usually link back to you.)

For example, here’s a simple visual that I included in one of my guides:



And because this visual explains a tricky concept, people LOVE embedding this image in their content:



In fact, this single Concept Visual has generated 20+ backlinks to my site.

Optimize Your Podcast Show Notes for SEO

Everyone and their mom has a podcast.

But very few people rank their show notes in Google.

Fortunately, optimizing your podcast show notes for SEO isn't super hard.

Here's how to do it.

First, get a full transcript of your interview.

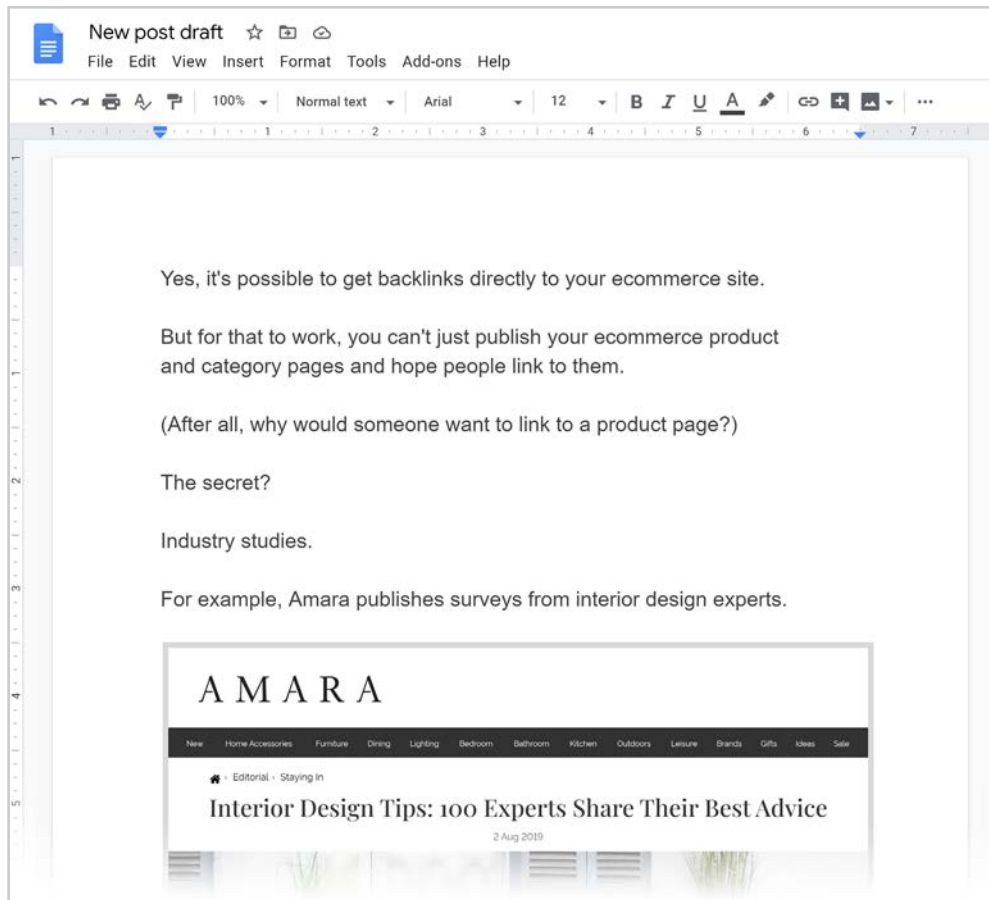
Then, turn that transcript into a full blog post.

In other words, don't just copy and paste your transcript and call it a day.

Instead, you want to repurpose the transcript into a post that could stand on its own, including:

- An introduction
- Subheadings
- Screenshots and visuals
- Internal and external links
- Comments section

Here's an example of how this can look.



Build Backlinks as a Podcast Guest

Podcasts are one of my all-time favorite ways to build links.

It's like guest posting... without all the back-and-forth. Just show up, share what you know, and you get a sweet backlink:

Brian dean is one of the leading experts on SEO and link building, and has a tremendous knowledge on content marketing strategies.

Brian founded **Backlinko** in 2013 to teach the lessons he learned along the way.

Since launching Backlinko, Brian quickly made a name for himself by publishing practical strategies that marketers can use to grow their online business. Backlinko is now one of the most popular marketing

And podcasting's popularity is growing like a beanstalk. In fact, 100 million Americans listen to at least one podcast per month (that's up 10% vs. last year.)

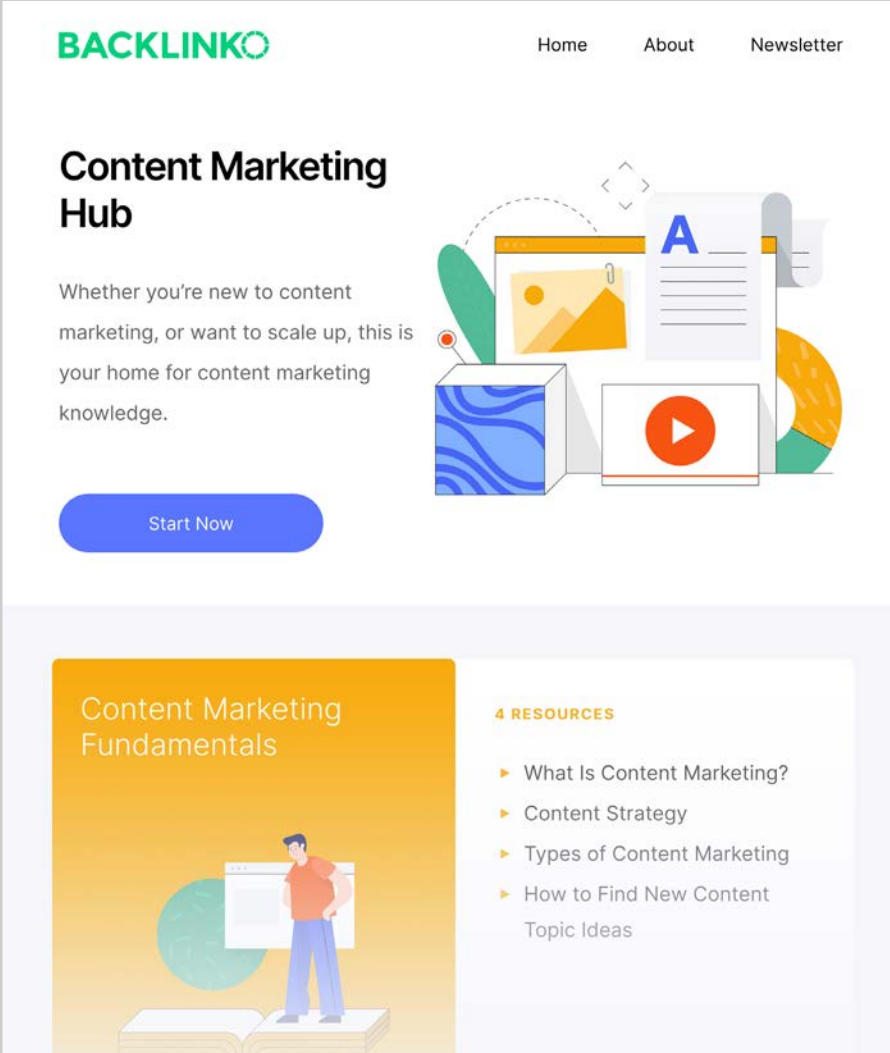
That means that next year there's probably going to be even MORE opportunities for you to get links from podcasts.

Publish Content Hubs

Content hubs are essentially a bunch of related content that cover a specific topic.

But instead of linking together random blog posts, you present them as entries in a single "hub".

And create a hub homepage for the hub.



The screenshot shows a website for BACKLINKO with a navigation menu (Home, About, Newsletter) and a main section titled "Content Marketing Hub". The main section includes a sub-header "Content Marketing Hub", a paragraph: "Whether you're new to content marketing, or want to scale up, this is your home for content marketing knowledge.", and a blue "Start Now" button. To the right is an illustration of a document with a play button, a pie chart, and a magnifying glass. Below this is a section titled "Content Marketing Fundamentals" with an illustration of a person standing on books, and a list of "4 RESOURCES":

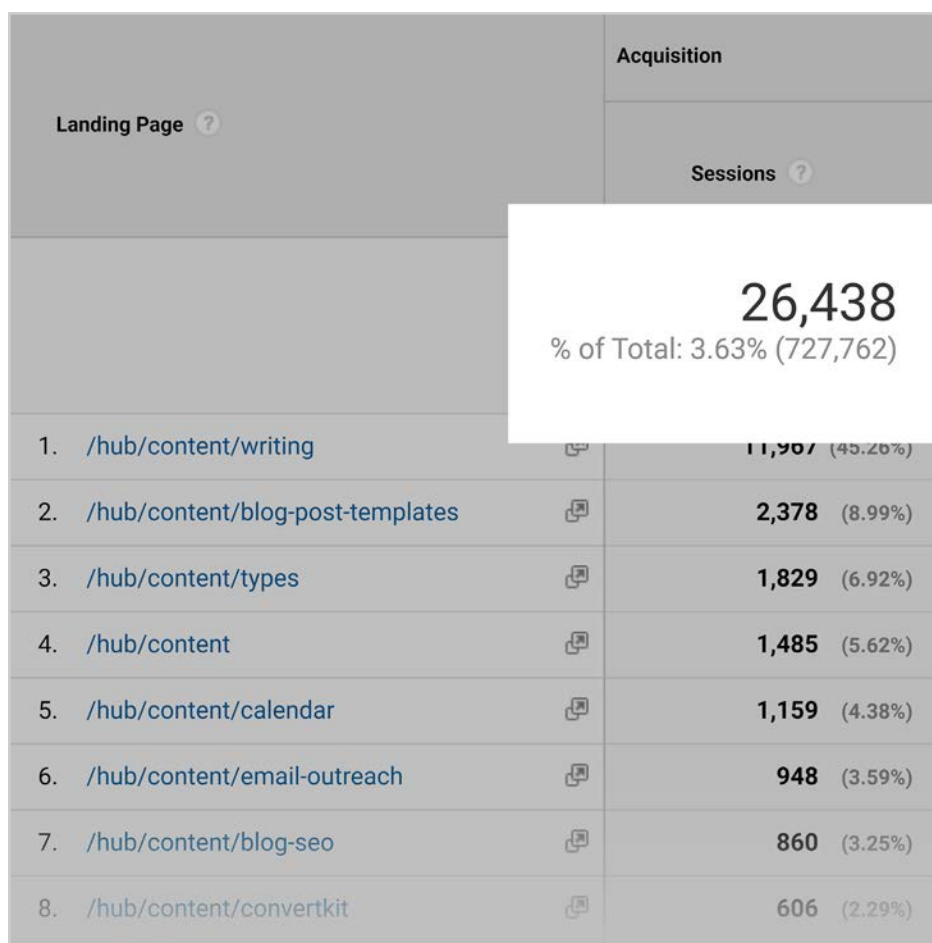
- ▶ What Is Content Marketing?
- ▶ Content Strategy
- ▶ Types of Content Marketing
- ▶ How to Find New Content Topic Ideas

To date, we've published three content hubs here at Backlinko:

- [The YouTube Marketing Hub](#)
- [The SEO Marketing Hub](#)
- [The Content Marketing Hub](#)

And they've done SUPER well.

In fact, the pages that make up The Content Marketing Hub alone bring in 26,438 visitors every month.



Landing Page ?	Acquisition	
	Sessions ?	
		26,438 % of Total: 3.63% (727,762)
1. /hub/content/writing		11,907 (45.26%)
2. /hub/content/blog-post-templates		2,378 (8.99%)
3. /hub/content/types		1,829 (6.92%)
4. /hub/content		1,485 (5.62%)
5. /hub/content/calendar		1,159 (4.38%)
6. /hub/content/email-outreach		948 (3.59%)
7. /hub/content/blog-seo		860 (3.25%)
8. /hub/content/convertkit		606 (2.29%)

These hubs do double duty for your site's SEO.

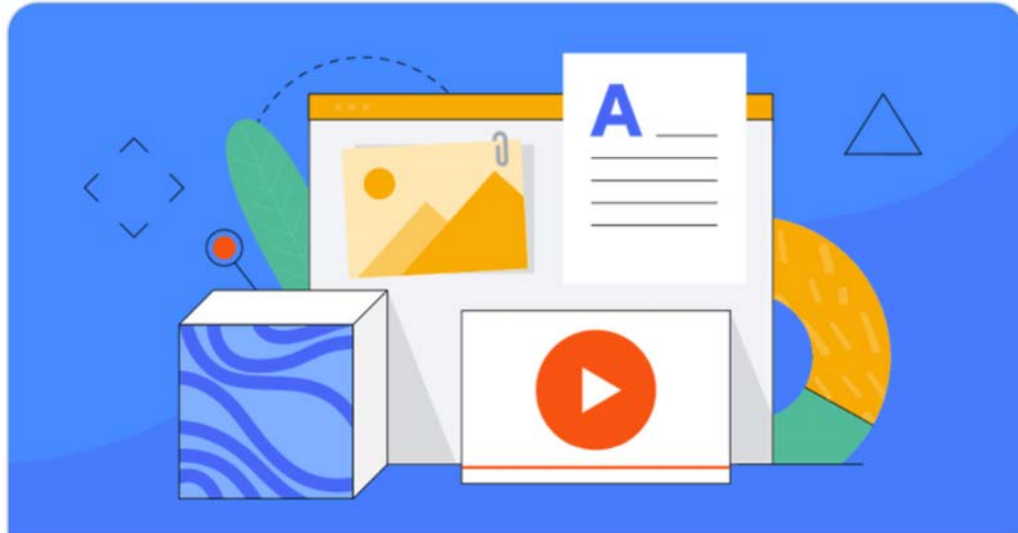
First, hubs are the type of "WOW" content that gets people sharing and linking to you.

Very few people are willing to put in the work required to create a content hub. So when you do, you'll instantly stand out.



Priya Florence Shah  @PriyaFlorence

Brian Dean's massive new guide covers 30+ key topics — including copywriting, content strategy, blog post templates, content design, blog SEO, content promotion... Oh Brian, how do you manage to put out such awesome content all the time?! backlinko.com/introducing-th... via @Backlinko 😊

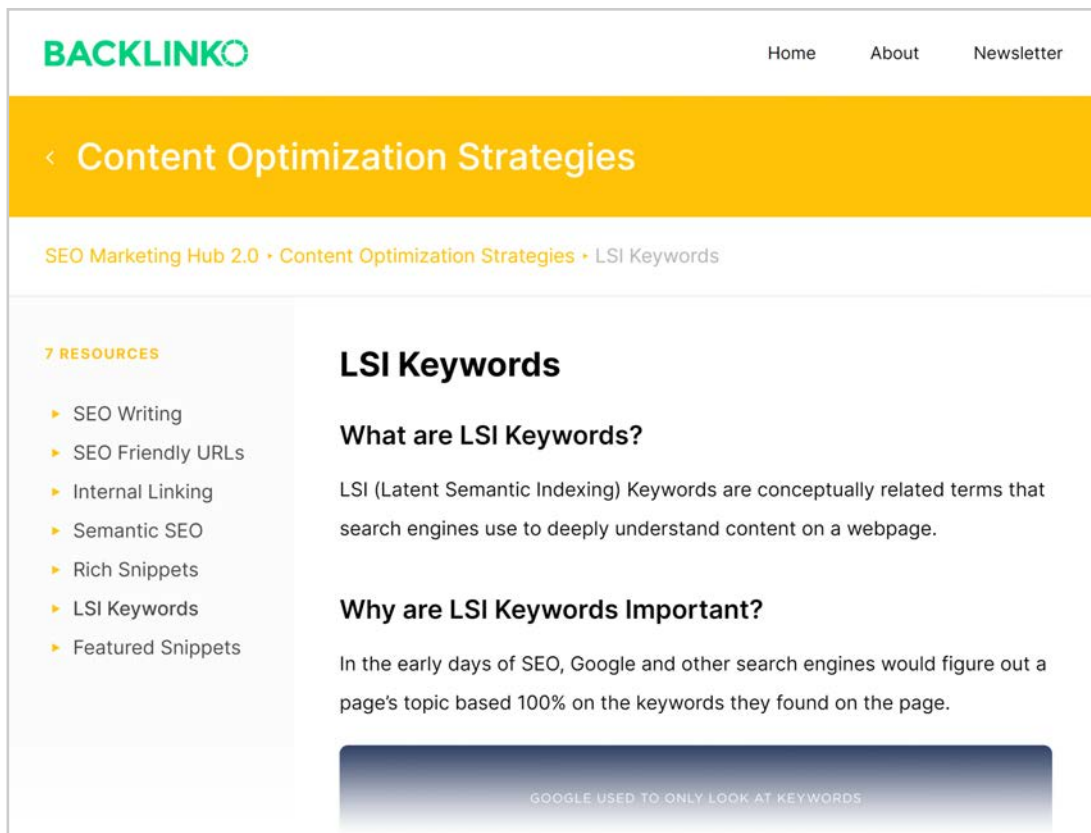


The Content Marketing Hub, A Free Library of Content Resources
A post announcing the new Content Marketing Hub.
backlinko.com



Second, your hub pages are strategically designed to rank for lots of definition keywords.

For example, one of our SEO Marketing Hub entries is optimized around the term “[LSI keywords](#)”.



And when I say “optimized” I don’t just mean using my keyword in my title tag.

The content is 1000% optimized for search intent.

For example, someone searching for “LSI keywords” probably wants to know the basics. Like what it is and why it’s important for SEO.

And each entry is structured to give people a primer on that topic.

