

How Long Does SEO Take?

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INTRODUCTION

“How long does SEO take?” is a question we frequently hear from marketing managers and business owners. It’s an important question to ask, especially when preparing marketing budgets and projecting revenue. Unfortunately, there’s no one answer.

SEO results vary based on numerous factors including, but not limited to, industry, competition, product offerings, and technical aspects of a website. SEO results are rarely immediate, and can often take several months with continued growth thereafter.

To better understand the time commitment for a proper SEO strategy, consider the three-phase approach we use at Digital Third Coast:

- **Keyword Research + Mapping**
1-2 months, updated annually
- **Technical Audit**
1-3 months, ongoing optimization as needed
- **Content Marketing**
Ongoing

At the end of this guide are case studies from our agency portfolio to provide samples of timelines. Please note, we’ve changed the company names to comply without privacy and non-disclosure agreements.

KEYWORD RESEARCH + MAPPING

1-2 MONTHS

Keyword research reveals which terms and phrases your prospective customers are using to find the goods and services you offer. Based on this research, our SEO analysts create a full keyword universe – a comprehensive look at all the phrases to optimize on your website. Then we'll consult with you to develop your keyword map, helping target the pages on your site so they're best suited to attract more qualified traffic.

A keyword map identifies optimal keyword targets for existing pages, based on search volume and competitive analysis of keywords. It also includes recommendations for additional pages, site structure changes and metadata review.

KEYWORD RESEARCH

MONTH 1

MONTH 6

MONTH 12

TECHNICAL AUDIT

2-3 MONTHS

After the keyword research and mapping, we next conduct a comprehensive technical site audit to ensure search engines can crawl and index the site.

Of the 230+ factors in Google's search algorithms, dozens of them are onsite factors. These factors include title tags, page headings, page content, redirects, site speed, linking structure and image optimization.

Optimizing for all onsite factors won't necessarily make your site rankings improve, but it will ensure that nothing prevents it from ranking.

KEYWORD
RESEARCH
+
TECHNICAL
AUDIT

MONTH 1

MONTH 6

MONTH 12

CONTENT MARKETING

ONGOING

Content marketing generates inbound links, improving the visibility and authority of your site in the eyes of Google. While keyword mapping and the technical audit helps improve your results, content marketing takes your SEO strategy to the next level, allowing you to improve your rankings across all your targeted keywords.

We achieve this by creating visual assests supported by data and research. A dedicated outreach team earns link placements by promoting the content to our extensive network of journalist and media influencers.

**KEYWORD
RESEARCH**

+

**TECHNICAL
AUDIT**

**CONTENT
PIECE NO. 1**

**CONTENT
PIECE NO. 2**

**CONTENT
PIECE NO. 3**

MONTH 1

MONTH 6

MONTH 12

CASE STUDY A: KEYWORD MAP

Client

Scheduling Inc.

About the client

A provider of checkout-and-scheduling software for AV equipment, Scheduling Inc.'s main target audience is universities. They had no previous experience working with a digital marketing agency, meaning onsite SEO elements (e.g., title tags, headers and URLs) were not optimized with a keyword strategy.

The process

At Digital Third Coast, keyword research starts immediately after client onboarding. We incorporate client feedback to ensure alignment with product or service offerings.

The results

The keyword map was presented to Scheduling Inc. and the recommendations were implemented within days. In the month following, we observed a 12.7% month-over-month increase in organic traffic and reported encouraging trends in onsite metrics, including drastic increases in pages/session and average session duration. This data confirmed the keywords and newly developed pages were in line with user expectations.

How long does this take?

In this case, we started work in April, and the keyword map was implemented in mid May. Our keyword research quickly revealed opportunities to both optimize existing pages and to target new industries and keyword groups. Originally, this client focused only on targeting "education" keywords. However, we were able to drastically expand their keyword universe by developing pages that target other industries, like manufacturing and healthcare.

Additional factors

For Scheduling Inc., we produced an impressive increase in results in a short amount of time. One of the largest factors that helped produce quick results was the client's in-house web development team, which implemented our recommendations quickly and smoothly. This client was engaged and provided thorough, timely feedback throughout the process.

Conclusion

Scheduling Inc.'s traffic increase was a robust, but not unusual, result. Keyword research and mapping are a prime area for quick improvement. With this client, SEO took about two months to begin seeing measurable results.

CASE STUDY B: CONTENT MARKETING

Client

Radio Inc.

About the client

Radio Inc. is an online radio station that competes with Pandora and iHeartRadio. It also competes for rankings with high domain authority sites like Wikipedia and YouTube. In such a competitive keyword landscape, we knew that creating content to generate high-authority inbound links was critical.

The process

The client had access to anonymised user data about the types of music listened to across the United States. This proprietary data represented an opportunity to create truly unique content. We developed a Christmas-themed content piece, which answered the question “Which States Have the Most Holiday Spirit?”

We then pitched the graphic to reporters, journalists, and influencers to share with their readers. When the content was shared, they would cite Radio, Inc. as the source of the piece, and link back to their site. These high value links from top-tier publications increased the strength of Radio Inc.’s website, and drove more organic visibility and traffic.

The results

Our outreach team has a deep understanding of the type of content publishers are interested in sharing and have established relationships across a range of verticals. These assets were featured on People (with a soft news audience), Billboard (music audience), AL.com (local news audience) and The Blaze (traditional news audience).

How long does this take?

After each content campaign, we reported across-the-board improvements in search rankings.

Conclusion

This client was able to provide proprietary data, which enabled us to generate content quickly. With other clients, we perform research and conduct surveys to generate data to inform content pieces.

Content marketing is a competitive field, but when done correctly it dramatically increases your visibility and traffic.

CASE STUDY C: TECHNICAL AUDIT

Client

DrillCo

About the client

DrillCo sells and rents industrial drilling equipment. At project initiation, their site was in poor shape, which is a common issue with complex sites. Web designers are often focused on the user experience of a website rather than technical optimization.

The process

After launching the project in March, we completed the technical audit by the end of April. Due to the poor shape of the site, the audit was a lengthy process that resulted in an above average number of recommendations. The client completed implementation of our recommendations in August.

The results

By November of the same year, we saw improvements in organic traffic and a 23% increase in organic conversions. This validated that our technical audit had improved the site from a search engine's perspective as well as a user perspective.

How long does this take?

Our client saw significant results after seven months.

Conclusion

Implementing the technical recommendations and optimizations is crucial to see SEO results. This client was dedicated and ensured all recommendations were implemented. This paid dividends and enabled them to perform better with other SEO strategies, like link building through content marketing.

CASE STUDY D: ONGOING SEO

Client

BoxCo

About the client

BoxCo is a well-established manufacturer of packaging equipment and solutions that wanted to increase qualified leads and drive sales. They understood that sustained SEO efforts is the key to success — not one-time campaigns.

The process

During the creative ideation process, we created a mindmap to identify topics related to BoxCo's business focus. We selected a topics that we knew we could express visually in infographics – a highly attractive format to journalist and an impactful experience for readers.

The results

Our outreach team earned many high-quality links from well-respected media sites including The New York Times, USA Today, Forbes, CNBC and Entrepreneur. As a result, BoxCo moved up in search results for its targeted keywords, which led to an increase in organic traffic and ultimately sales.

How long does this take?

BoxCo understands that SEO is a sustained process and has partnered with us for years to deliver multiple content campaigns each year. Each content campaign (research, design, development and outreach) can take three to four months.

Conclusion

In the absence of client-provided proprietary data, our content team was able to create compelling narratives that consistently earned significant media attention through research, surveys, and existing data. With the sustained and ongoing effort, BoxCo is still seeing dividends from its SEO efforts, and ensured all recommendations were implemented. This paid dividends and enabled them to perform better with other SEO strategies, like link building through content marketing.

SEO Wrap-Up

Be wary of digital marketing agencies who promise drastic results in a short time frame from their strategies.

A methodic, consistent approach is most likely to produce the best results for your business. A one-off attempt will not yield results.

If you're thinking of implementing an SEO strategy for your business, reach out. We love talking SEO!

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