SEO HELP
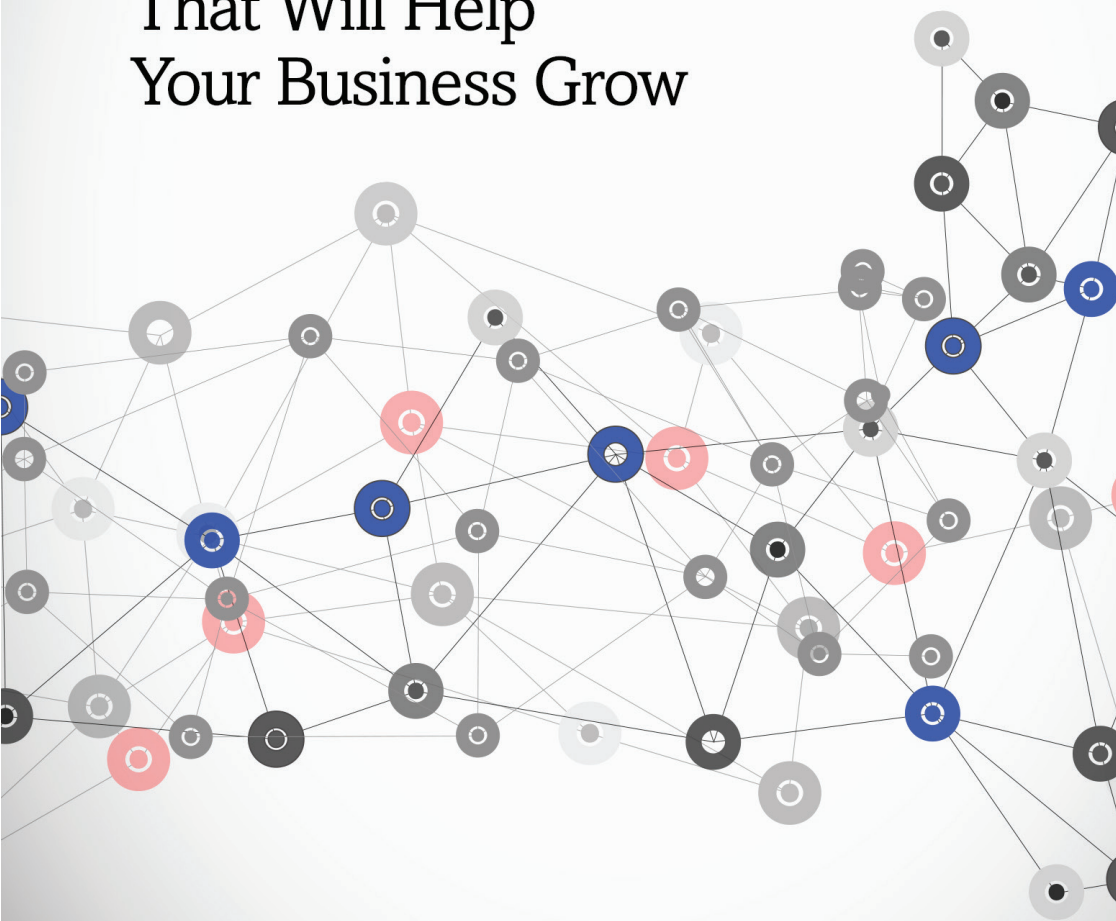
20 Semantic Search Steps

That Will Help
Your Business Grow

DAVID AMERLAND

SEO Help: 20 Semantic Search Steps that Will Help Your Business Grow

David Amerland

Online Success Series

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Acknowledgements

No book I write these days is entirely mine. The ideas, suggestions and practices I promote are the result of interactions with the thoughts, case studies, circumstances and practical issues of many others. Some of these are clients of mine with a global presence and, by request, will have to remain anonymous. Others are friends or colleagues who are too numerous to mention. Some have contributed exceptionally with their insights and expertise when engaging with me. Of those I would like to mention Mark Traphagen and Eric Enge, both of Stone Temple Consulting. Aaron Bradley whose ideas in the semantic search space have always been exceptional. Martin Shervington has been a constant source of inspiration because he has never stopped experimenting. Teodora Petkova needs to be mentioned, not just for her knowledge on the subject but also because her managing of the Google Semantic Search Community on G+ gave me the breathing space needed to write coherently. All of you, on G+ who took part in my thought experiments and the discussions they sparked, "Thank You", you all make a writer's and analyst's life way less lonely than it should be.

Dedication

For all those who know me, a big thank you for putting up with me. A big plus to Jimmy who "got it" after four years of trying and is now running with it. Total gratitude to both N and N. Between them they keep me sane, grounded and determined.

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It's still all about being found!

The very first edition of this book came out in 2010 and a lot has changed in search in that time. SEO has gone from an acronym which constantly needs to be explained to a term which underpins many of the activities of every webmaster.

During this time search itself has also changed. It has become, for a start, the de facto means through which we navigate the web. It has also matured and fragmented. Google still dominates the web as far as search is concerned but search has splintered across video and mobile to name but just two massive search verticals.

YouTube is the second most popular search engine on the web. Google has managed to become the dominant player in mobile search and search results delivered across mobile devices.

As a result, search, these days, is about being found not just in traditional, desktop based searches but also being found on the go through mobile devices and tablets, being found in apps when those who use them least expect to find you and being found on search, in search queries that still reflect your business but you may not have thought of.

In few other marketing activities does the phrase "the more
things change, the more they remain the same" hold as
much meaning as it does in search.

In the intervening years since *SEO Help* v1.0 came out to so
much acclaim search has gone from an activity that entered
a business' marketing toolkit as an afterthought to being
one that is directly responsible for a business' success. In
plain speak Search *is* Marketing. If your business cannot be
found on the web it cannot do business.

It really has become that simple.

This also begs the question on what you need to do. The
original *SEO Help* had a simple premise: it offered you 20
search engine optimization steps. It did not explain why
you had to take them, nor how they impacted on search
engine technology to help your website rise in rankings. I
took that to be one of those things that are nice to know but
not necessary. I still do. Search however has fragmented to
such an extent that I could easily give you 40 – 60 maybe
even 100 steps to take, this time round and perhaps not
even cover it adequately.

I haven't.

I have still kept this book to 20 steps, though these now are
new steps, almost entirely.

I have taken into account the fact that technical SEO has
receded ever deeper into the website mechanics and non-

technical SEO has risen a lot more in importance. Throughout this book I have factored in Semantic Search as it now plays a key role in the way search across the web evolves. And I have fully taken into account the fact that search now is all about intercept marketing. It's not just about getting your website to rank higher for specific search terms anymore because the idea that you could simply outrank your competitors and get more business this way has, itself, undergone a fundamental change.

Being first on the first page of Google makes less sense than ever because "the first page of Google" has fragmented and mutated to the point that it is virtually different for every person using a search engine, looking for something, through their device.

So, while being "first on the first page of Google" is still important, the idea of 'first' or rather the value of it has changed almost as radically as the first page of Google itself. What counts today are conversions from online visitors to customers and being found at just the right moment when those looking for your products or services are most highly motivated to take action.

With these two thoughts in mind I have put together 20 fresh steps. I have not always explained the why but I have, as always, detailed the what.

Follow them and you will see a couple of things happening: first your website ranking will improve. That's a given. But second, and more important you will increase the targeted

visitor numbers to your website. These will be visitors
actively looking to find you, who will be finding you
through unexpected avenues.

These visitors, the ones who really want to know what your
online business does, are also the ones most likely to want
to do business with you. It is these you need the most and it
is these that I will help you find.

In the preface to the first edition of this book I wrote,
somewhat naively perhaps, that SEO may go away some
time soon. I was not entirely wrong. SEO as an activity that
aims to game Google search has, largely gone away.
Websites of low quality that appeared on the search results
without deserving to be there have also gone away. In many
ways the SEO mentality of the past is well and truly gone.
But SEO defined as search engine optimization that helps
your website get indexed better, faster so it can be found is
never truly going to go away.

The reason for this lies in the underlying complexities that
are found in the intersection where search technology
meets website building technology and browser technology.

These are complexities that do not concern us here
however. What you need to know is that in the brave new
world of semantic search and mobile marketing you have a
practical 20-step guide that will help your business do more
business, find more customers and make more money.

Use it. Win.

User Guide

It's ironic that a book that's been written with ease of use in mind should need a user guide on how to use it. *SEO Help* has been written so that each chapter, though part of a progression, is largely autonomous.

As a result you could start from the last chapter and work your way to the front, though personally I would not recommend it. You can dip into any chapter you think will help you right now.

Or you could do the conventional thing and simply start from chapter one and work your way through to chapter twenty.

You must, however, *always* make sure that you go through the Action Checklist at the end of each chapter and answer every question as fully and honestly as possible.

Whatever you decide to do, it'll work. This book is practical through and through. Each chapter is a step that gives you an insight in what you have to do in order to get your website to rank higher but, more than anything else, to help your website be found, have more traffic and more customers. In the process it will also help you understand your business better which will have a welcome, positive impact in the way you run it and market it.

Step #1

Create a Google Account

 # A Google Account is central to the success of your online identity.

If you are still wondering whether to create a Google Account or not you should have one already!

There is some debate online about whether giving access to your privacy to Google is a good thing or not and whether Google truly is a "Do not be Evil" company as its motto proclaims.

I have an opinion about that informed by my dealings with many companies and online businesses but it's immaterial. There are two things right now that you need to keep in mind. First that Google's recently updated privacy guidelines are no different to those of Microsoft and Yahoo and they are heck of a lot better than Apple's and Amazon's and second that the moment you get online to work you should give up any serious expectation of privacy.

That doesn't mean that everything you do should be on the web but you should not expect anything you put on the public web to be hidden for long.

If you have not got a Google Account point your browser at: http://**accounts.google**.com/ and create one.

Make sure you fill it out completely and, incidentally, subscribe for, at the very least: Gmail, Google+, Google Analytics, Webmaster Tools, Docs, anything in short you find of value amongst Google's services.

There is a good reason for that and it's based on the fact that Google uses all of this to draw in data about yourself, who you are and what you're doing. It is suitably anonymized so only the patterns of your online behavior are logged in. It all, however, goes to fill in your online profile and generate the trust Google places in your digital presence.

For the same reason you should be logged into your Google account when carrying out Google searches and when interacting with others on social media networks.

The 'social signature' you generate is very much part of your digital footprint and Google uses it to show you results in search that are relevant to you. More than that however, Google uses the data to assess your importance and influence on the web.

If you are ever going to be successful in the new SEO world you will need to have an online presence that is capable of acquiring a little 'weight' at least and leveraging some influence, if not your own then that of others. To achieve any of this you need to now establish a visible online identity.

If you are new to all this you will see that upon signing up for a Google Account, Google will most probably require you to also sign up for a Google+ Account. Do it! Again, I am not going to debate the right and wrong aspect of this. Right now what you want is to be able to promote your business online and have your site rank high on Google search. Join Google+ and go to **Chapter 3** to see the best way to fill out your Google+ profile in order to profit from it.

One last word of warning. If you're tempted to create more than one Gmail account thinking that it will help amplify your presence and ability to market, resist it. You may have more than one Gmail address for personal and professional use but the days of creating multiple accounts and online identities and using them to artificially boost a website or a promotion are now behind us.

Google can see all this activity even if you have not linked anything in any way. So treat your online identity with the same care and attention that you treat your offline one. As a matter of fact use the way you behave offline as a guide on how you now need to behave online.

Before semantic search came along you could safely assume that what happened on your website (or the social media network where you spent most time on) stayed there. This is no longer the case. The web has become transparent. Data has become portable. So have the sense of authority and expertise you project and that impacts directly upon your reputation. Reputation leads to trust. Without trust no business can ever take place. So developing a sense of trust in the online world is key to succeeding as a business.

Semantic Search Action List

1. Create a Google Account – go to: (http://**accounts**.**google**.com/)

2. Create a recognizable Gmail Address. Do not create anything spammy like MarketingGod@gmail.com – go instead for your name and experiment for ways that make it easy to remember. Think about how easy it will be to type it without making any spelling mistakes. This is particularly important if you have a name that is unusual or too long. You may want to experiment with ways to make it more user friendly.

3. Join Google+. I won't go into any detail here as it is covered in **Chapter 3**.

4. Allow Google to have access to your location (this is important for the quality of a number of Google services).

Location-awareness in your Google account helps Google
establish who you are and what you do a little faster.

5. Start thinking about what you need to do in order to
establish as much "data density" as possible in your online
presence. This includes thinking about the type of
information you will put on your website and the kind of
presence you will have to develop across the web, as a
whole, through your social media profiles.

6. You will need to think about shooting a couple of high-
quality, head and shoulders shots of you. Approach this the
same way you would offline: think in terms of the
impression you want to create in your target audience.

7. In your Google Account you will need to set up Security
(http://goo.gl/uN50Hu). This is really important. It is best
if you set up two-step verification (http://goo.gl/ikveoX)
and install Google Authenticator (http://goo.gl/cvl2Y) in
your device(s). A hacking of your Google Account could
seriously compromise everything you do online, just as
identity theft can compromise your offline presence.

8. Set up backups. Link up and verify your cell phone to
your Google account (if you haven't done so already) and
put in place at least one more (if not two) alternative email
addresses where you may be contacted.

9. Add a nickname. In the "Personal Info" section add a
nickname you are known by, if applicable. This can be a
pen name, if you are a writer, a stage name for an artist or

actor or a name through which you are commonly associated with on forums.

10. In the "Languages" section of your Google account input any other languages that you understand. If you speak French or German, for instance, put that in there as well.

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• Create trust and authenticity on the web
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• Integrate video and images in search marketing
• Shape your digital identity
• Form clear brand values
• Future-proof your SEO

Start using semantic search techniques from the very first moment. Designed for the busy webmaster, business leader and entrepreneur, each chapter can be read alone, or in sequence. A comprehensive list of 200 questions, presented at the end of each chapter in tranches of ten allows you to reshape the entire way you approach digital marketing and search, irrespective of the size of your business or the budget available.

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