THEHOTH

The Ultimate Guide To E-Commerce SEO



Introduction To E-Commerce SEO

Did you know that organic search results are 8.5x more likely to drive clicks than PPC ads?

What if you can attract *more* new customers to your online store without spending an arm and a leg on advertising?

You can, with search engine optimization for your store!

With the fast-evolving search engine algorithms, strategies that worked just a year or two ago may already be obsolete today.

Not to mention that SEO for e-commerce comes with its own set of challenges that most content-based sites in a B2B industry don't face.

To stay relevant and keep up with the competition, you can no longer just throw a few keywords together and hope for the best.

In this guide, we'll go through all the best practices AND common pitfalls of how to rank you e-commerce store and get loads of killer organic traffic!

Let's get into it!

Keyword Research For E-Commerce

Whether you already have your product pages up or you're looking to reoptimize them, keyword research is an important part of the process.

There are a few ways to go about keyword research.

The first one is one of my favorites and it's called the "Easy Wins Method"

Easy Wins Keyword Research

The concept here is to go find out all the terms that your website is ranking for, but is not at the top of the search results, and re-optimize that page!

You can use our free tool here to find out all the keywords your website ranks for.

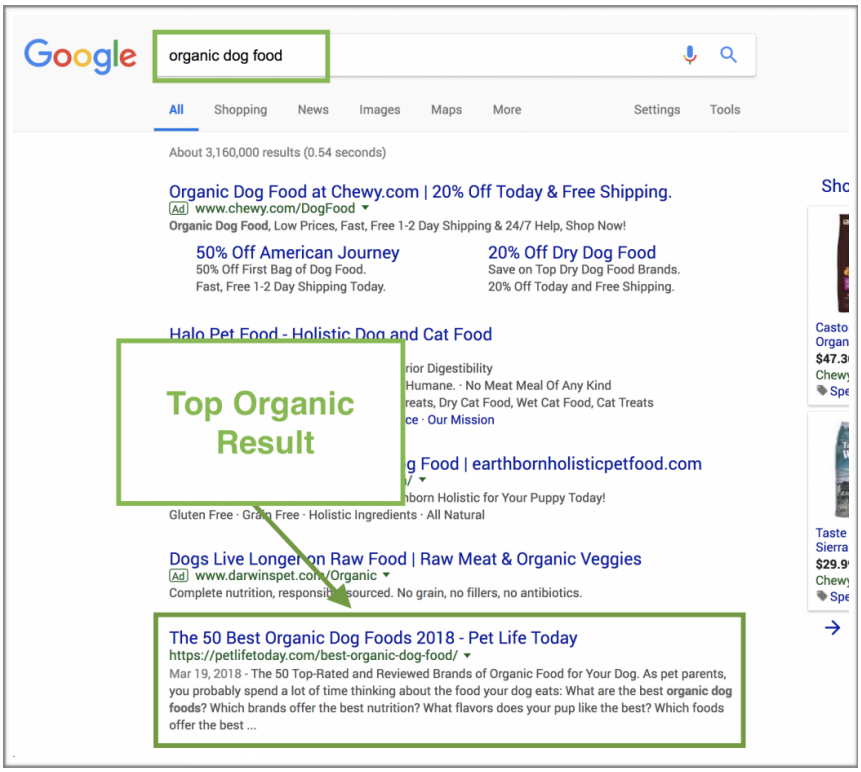
After you export this list, you can build links to these pages, re-optimize them, and build quick wins in your traffic!

Product Specific Keywords

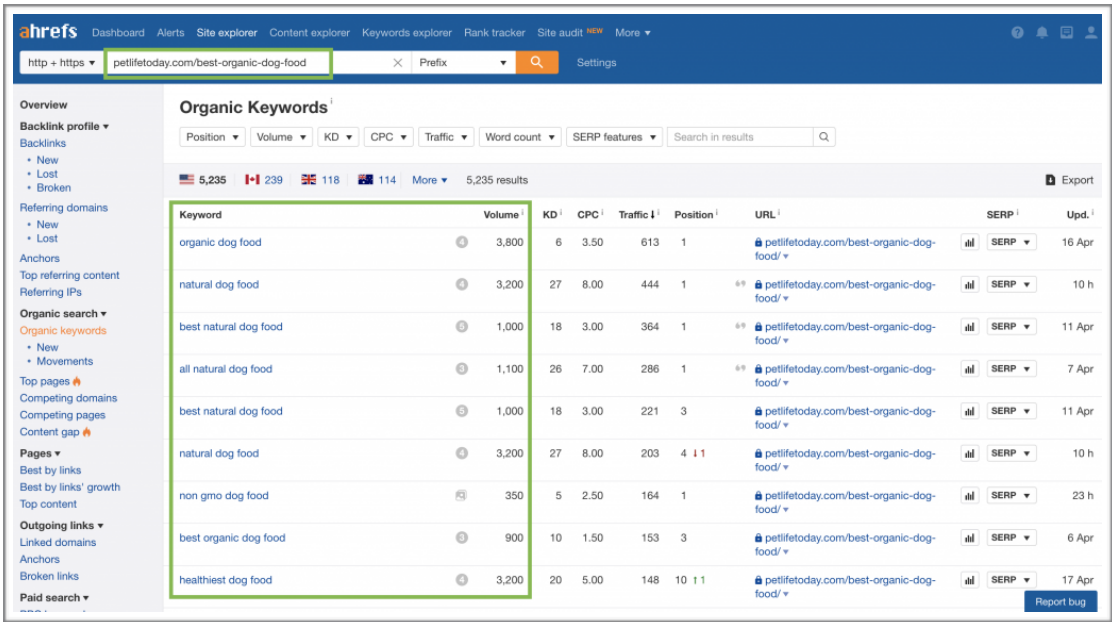
To try and find all the keywords that you want to include on a product page, I like to go look at what's ranking in Google, then run that through a keyword research tool.

For instance, lets say you have a page for organic dog food.

I would first search google for a top ranking result.



Next, you can plug that URL into your favorite keyword research tool like Ahrefs.
Then take a look at all the keywords that the page is ranking for. This will give you loads of ideas!



On-Page SEO For E-Commerce

On-page SEO is still important, but simply jamming keywords into the titles and meta descriptions isn't enough to rank high in search results.

Search engine algorithms are prioritizing relevance and engagement, so make sure your product page content is designed to send the right signal.

Create Unique Product Descriptions

A common problem that e-commerce stores often have is not having unique product descriptions. Many times product descriptions are copied from the manufacturer, so every e-commerce store that sells that product is using the same content.

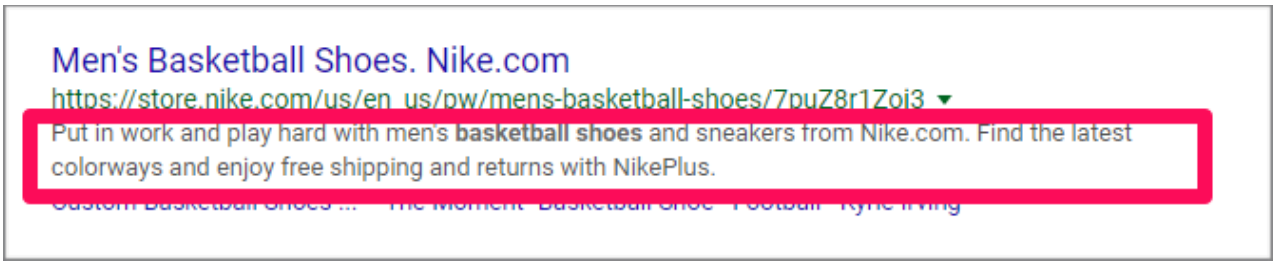
You'll want to make sure that you create unique product descriptions over time to avoid duplicate content on all product and category pages.

We recommend that each page should have a minimum of 1,000 words of content.

It's a good idea to search for the term you want to rank for and check out what's ranking in terms of content length and optimization. Google tells you what it wants!

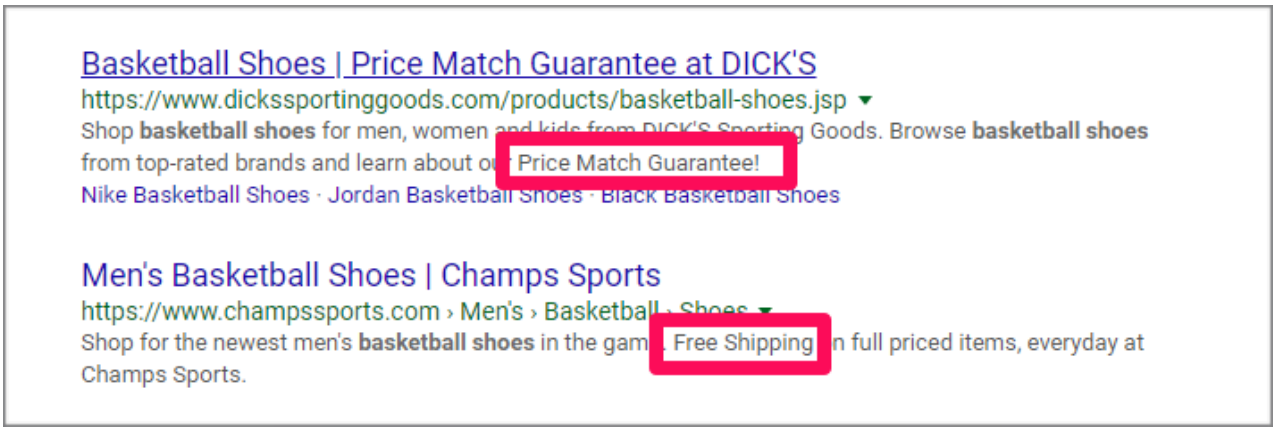
Meta Descriptions

A meta description is the short line of text that appears under the page title on the search results. It looks like this:



It helps visitors determine if they want to click through to view the content by giving them a brief preview/overview of the content on your page.

Besides including relevant keywords in the meta description of each product page, you can also add phrases such as “Free Shipping” or “Price Match Guarantee” to maximize the click-through rate (CTR.)



Higher CTR signals relevance to search engines and helps indirectly to increase organic rankings.

Use your meta description to compel users to click, and back that click up with a landing page that keeps them on-site.

User-Generated Content (UGC)

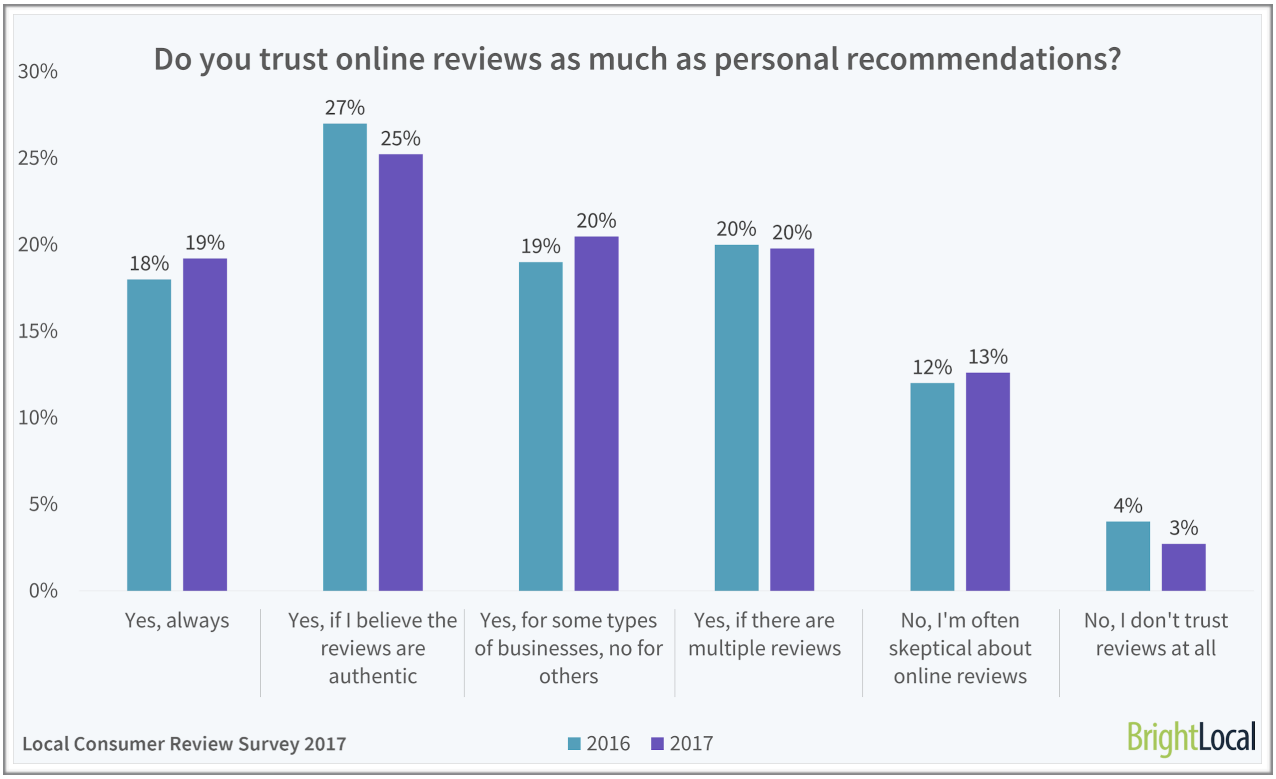
User-generated content drives 25% of search traffic for the top brands in the world.

UGC not only helps your site rank on search engines results, but it also gives you backlink opportunities that otherwise wouldn’t exist.

You can also leverage user-generated content on your product pages. For example, you can embed social media posts with images and videos to boost social SEO and increase engagement.

This works to again showcase social proof. And social proof works.

According to a recent study, 85% of people trust online reviews as much as personal recommendations.



([Image Source])

Customer reviews and ratings are a top-tier form of UGC that helps improve SEO in several ways. It provides search engines with fresh, trustworthy content, it increases the time visitors spend interacting with your product pages, and it adds relevant keywords to the content.

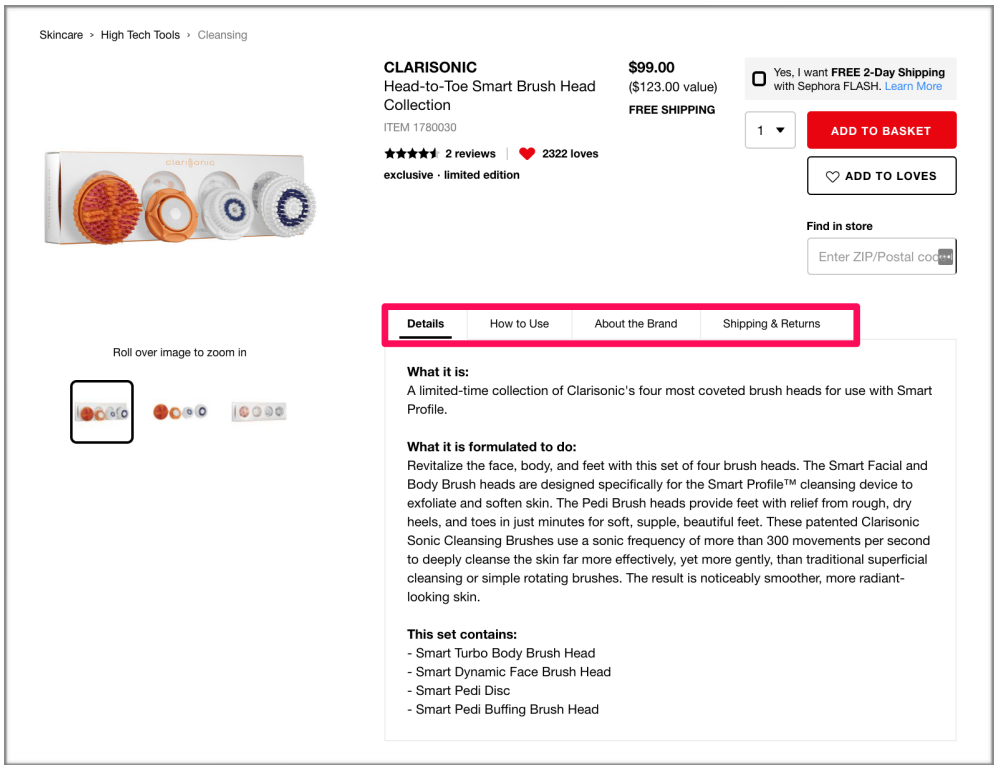
User Experience

E-commerce presents lots of opportunities for making your site more useable. Let's talk about some common problems and solutions:

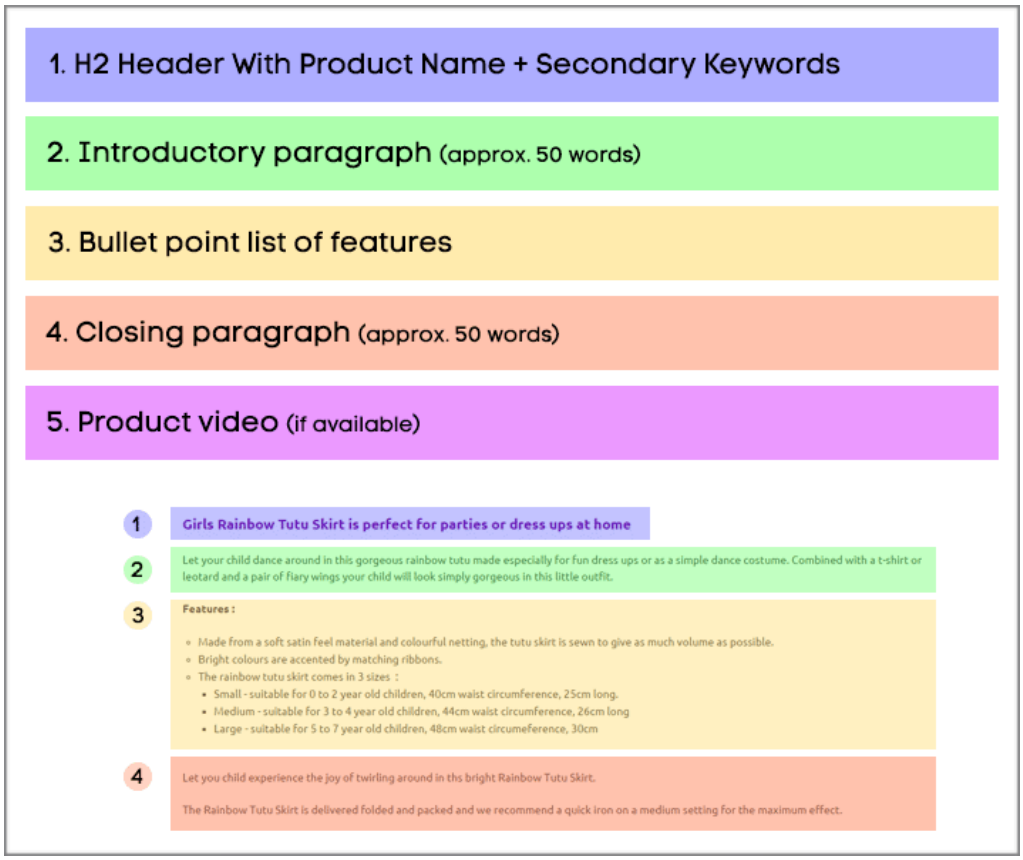
Improve User Experience With Content

The challenge with having a lot of content is that too much text on a page can reduce usability and divert the attention of visitors away from the call-to-action (i.e., hitting the “add to cart” button.)

You can organize content with tabs or accordions to reduce clutter:



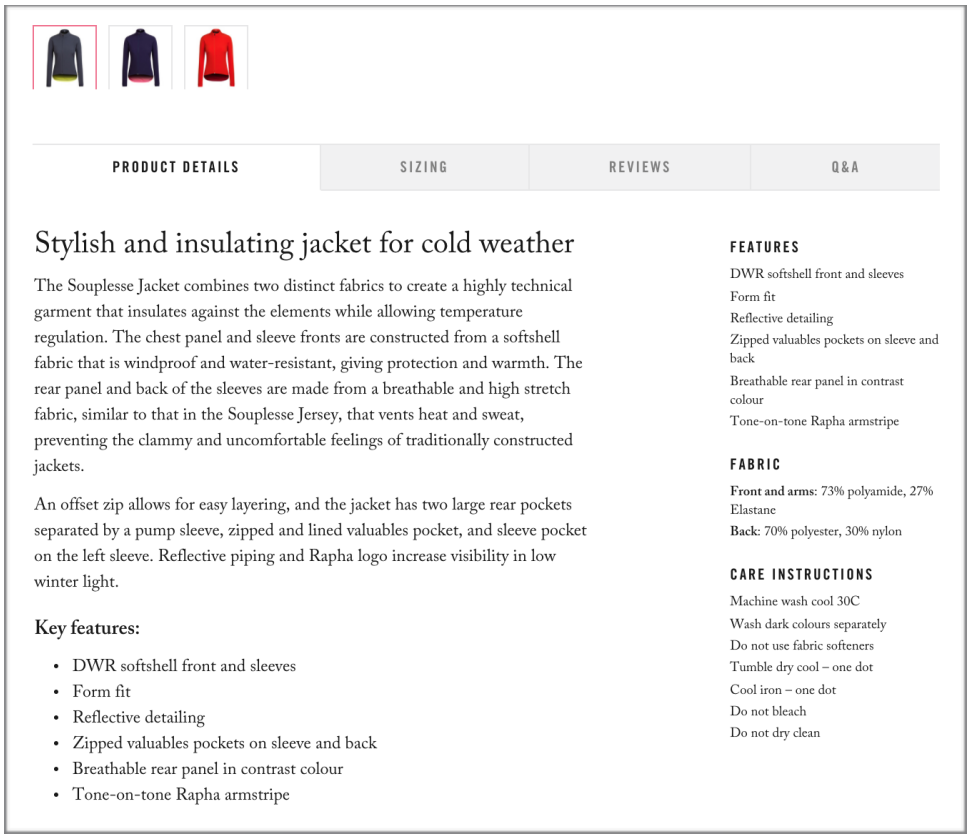
You also want to leverage visual hierarchy and formatting elements to make the content more scannable and user-friendly.



(Image Source)

In this example below, Rapha presents a good amount of content without sacrificing usability by laying out the copy in an easy-to-read format.

They also use tabs to make it easy for shoppers to find the information they need, such as sizing info and reviews.

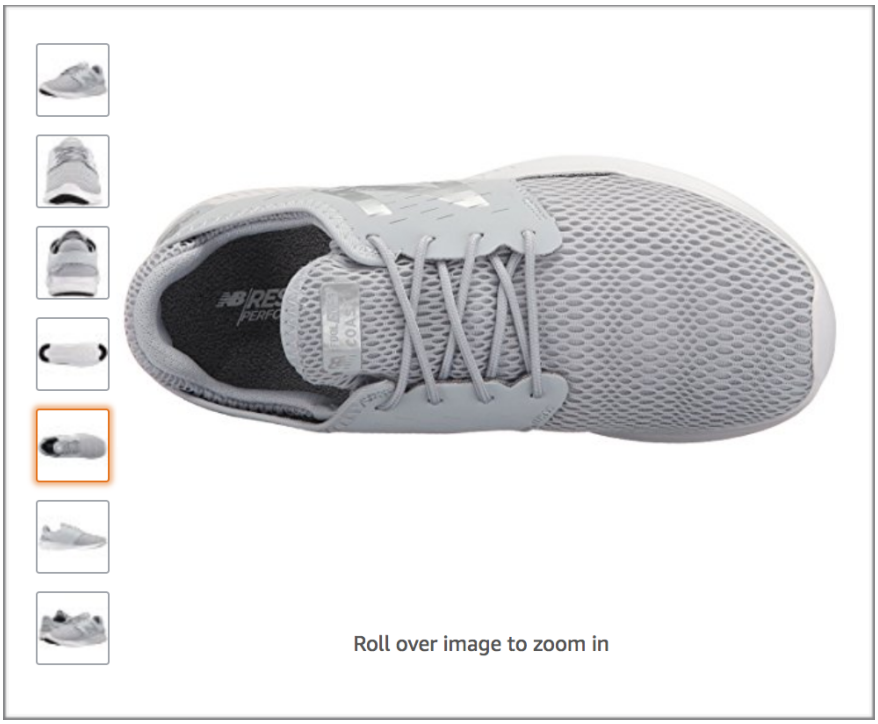


Using accordion-style tabs, they can pack tons of text and product information on the page without overwhelming visitors or distracting from the main goal: Sales.

Using Visual Content

Using visual content, especially high-quality photos, is a great way to showcase your products.

Leveraging technologies like zoom and 360-degree view can help increase shoppers' engagement with the content:



Be sure to optimize your images such that they don't impact load time (or page speed), and include keywords in the alt text to signal relevance to search engines.

Taking Advantage Of Video

According to Cisco, video content will account for 82% of search engine traffic by 2021.

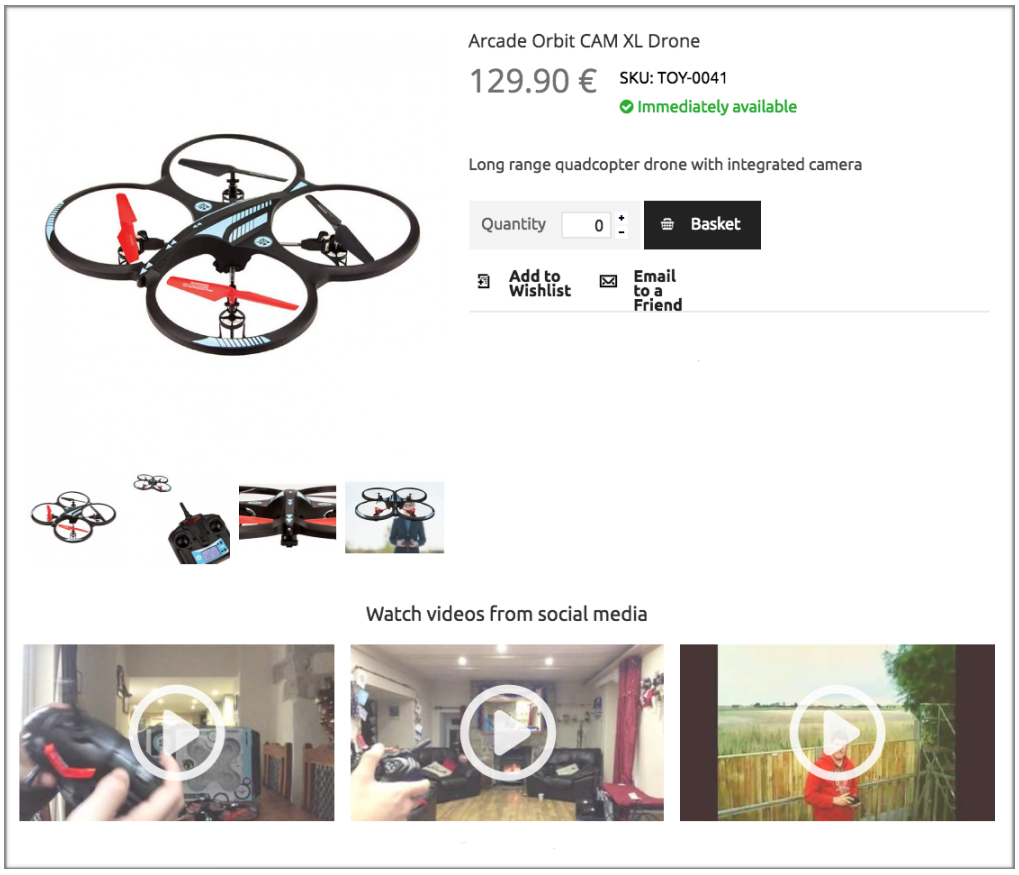
It's safe to say that video is dominating the online world, and it only can benefit an e-commerce company to add video content to their product pages.

Post how-to and demo videos about your products to increase dwell time and engagement on your product pages.

Videos appear in 70% of the top 100 search results listings. And viewers are 64-85% more likely to buy a product after watching a product video!

Focus on creating high-quality video content that you can display on-site.

You can also use videos submitted by users to show your products in action while also leveraging the idea of social proof and spending less time and money creating them on your own.



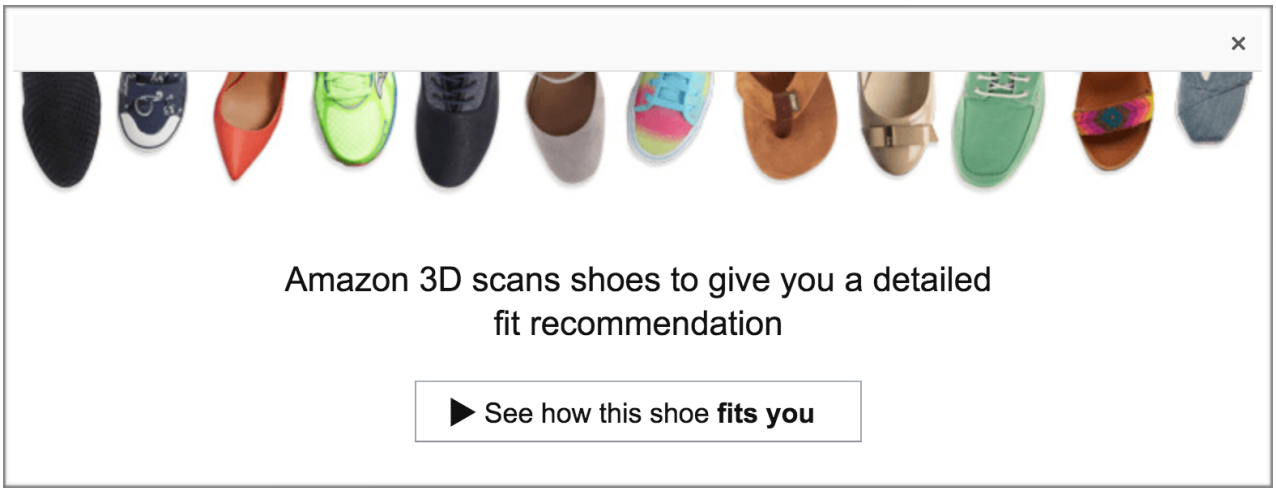
Interactive Tools

Dwell time for SEO matters. Keeping people on your site and engaging them with features and content can aid in your SEO success.

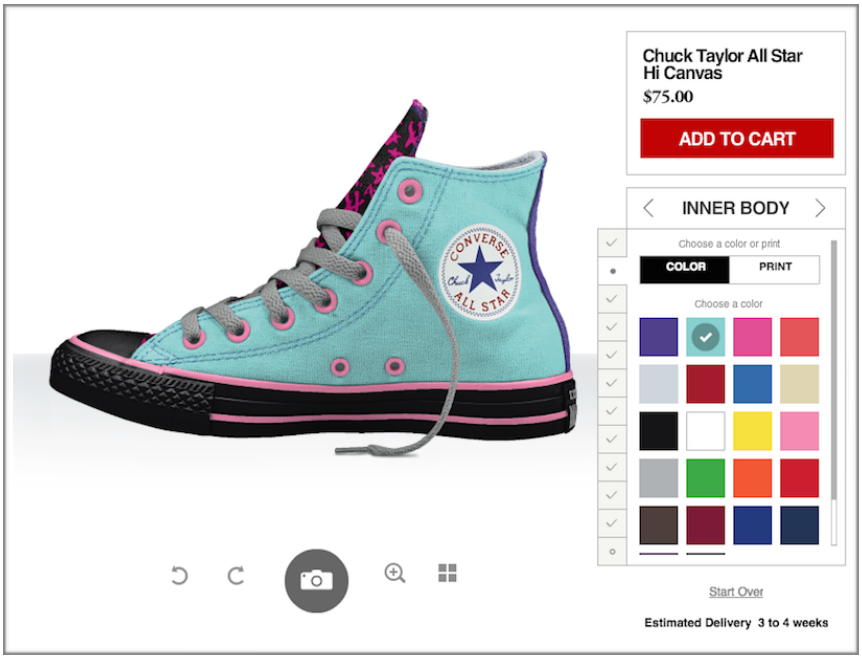
But that's often difficult to accomplish for an e-commerce business. In most cases, the majority of your site is product-based.

Currently, e-commerce businesses are finding amazing ways to use interactive tools to boost engagement and time on site, which are indirect ranking factors.

Amazon is king when it comes to using interactive tools to boost time on site with micro-conversions. Using a size recommender, they help shoppers find the right size and fit with engaging content.



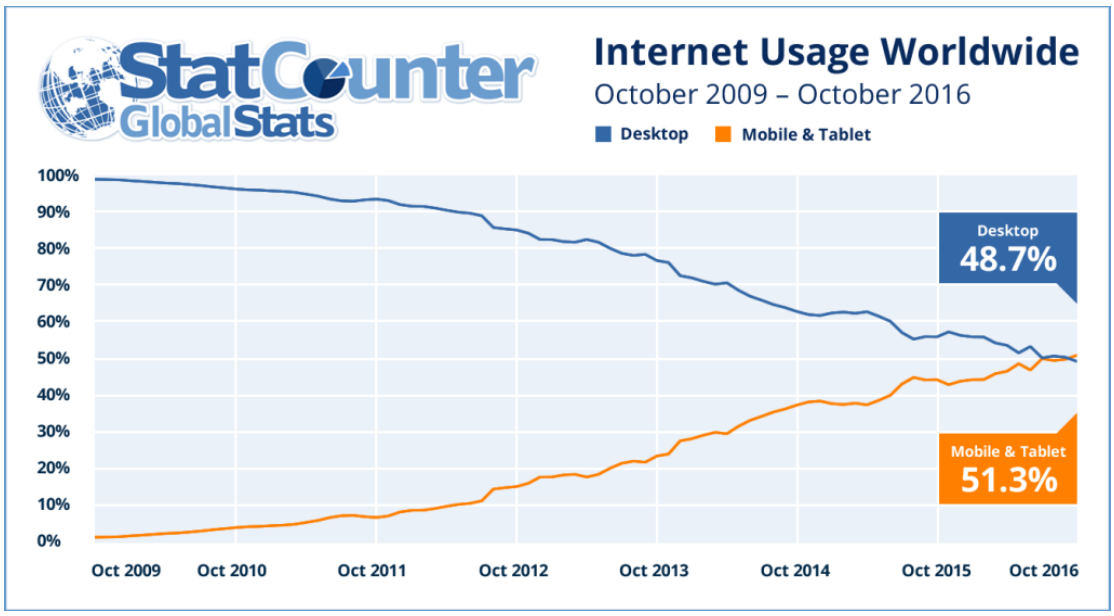
Companies like Converse and Nike both use product customization tools to give users more control over their experience, getting them hooked during the process.



Tools can help build more engagement with each page on your site. Try giving users more control over their experience.

Optimizing For Mobile

As more people are shopping on their mobile devices, a good mobile user experience is important if you want to entice visitors to stay on your site and engage with your content. Currently, the majority of traffic worldwide is mobile:



(Image Source)

With this shift in browsing behavior, Google is already penalizing websites that aren't mobile-friendly and is already rolling out a mobile-first index that prioritizes sites that are optimized for mobile user experiences.

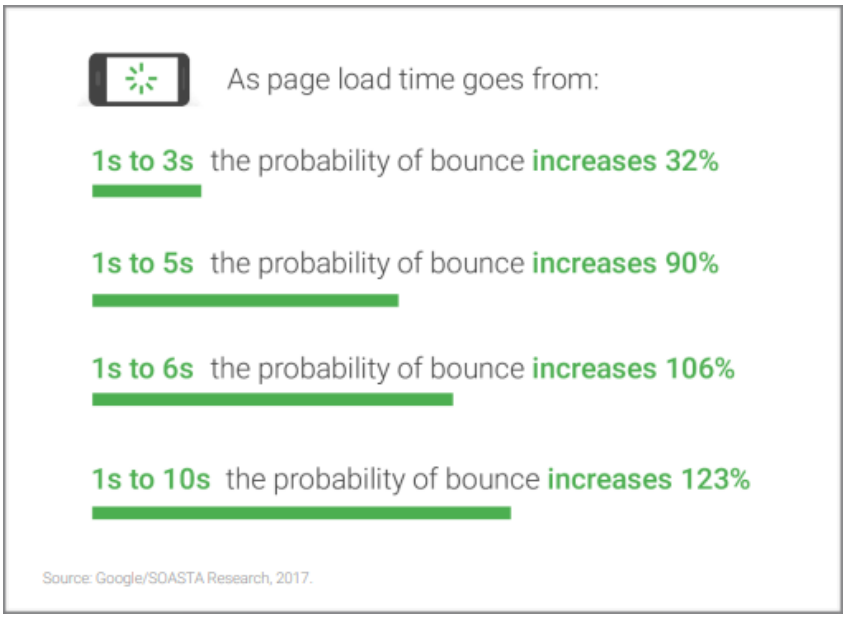
A mobile-optimized website means more than just squeezing a desktop experience into a smaller screen, too.

Here are some mobile optimization best practices that will improve customer experience and boost your organic store rankings:

Page Speed

A longer page load time is associated with a higher bounce rate, which negatively impacts SEO.

According to a Google report, just a few seconds can account for massive swings in your bounce rate.



(Image Source)

In fact, 47% of consumers expect your site to load in just two seconds or less, and 40% of people abandon a site that takes more than just three seconds to fully load.

Speed can effectively turn high-quality traffic into no sales and a massive bounce rate.

In July of 2018, Google will dampen rankings for slower mobile sites in an effort to improve the user experience for mobile users.

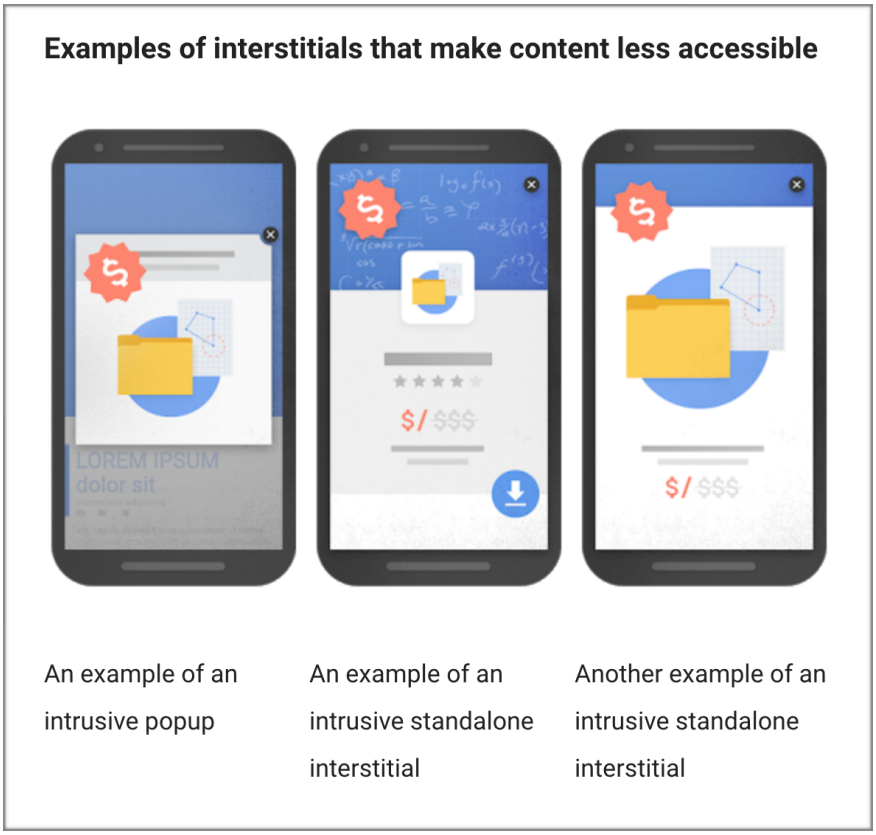
If you want to keep customers around, site speed needs to be a big priority.

Thankfully, Google offers free tools like Test My Site where you can analyze your current mobile site. Then, it will list the specific ways you can improve it.

Try running your site through the tool and implementing the suggestions to improve site speed.

Pop-ups

Since January of 2016, Google has been lowering the ranking of sites that use intrusive popups that prevent mobile users from accessing the site content.



(Image Source)

To avoid being penalized by Google, avoid using popups that detract from positive user experiences.

Try using timed popups that trigger based on how many pages a person visits. Or, you can use exit intent to capture users that are looking to leave.
Studies show an average of 10% conversion increases using exit intent.

Plus, you don't have to worry about negatively impacting the user experience for a few extra sales.

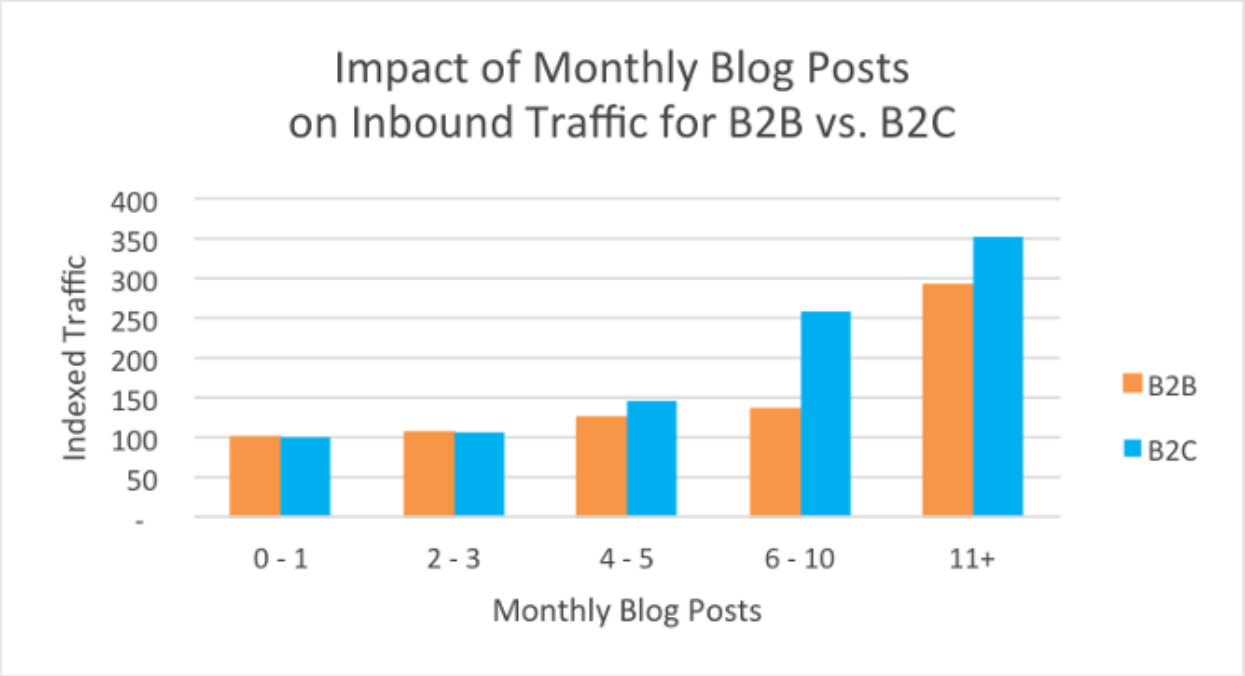
Content Strategy For E-Commerce

Without content, you can't appear for diverse keywords on the search results.

And without links, you can't build trust, credibility, and referral traffic.

Content should be the foundation of your e-commerce SEO strategy.

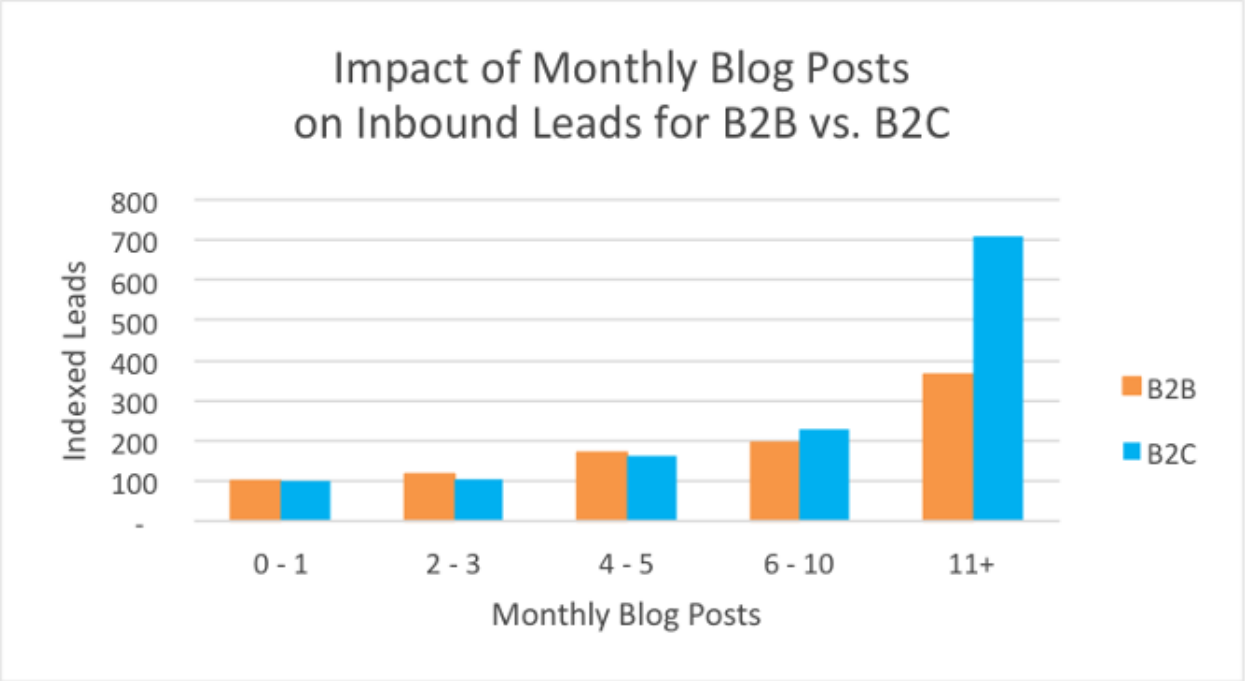
According to HubSpot, the more blog posts (content) you publish each month, the more traffic you'll drive from organic search:



(Image Source)

This data applies to both B2C and B2B companies.

More content not only drives more traffic, but it also drives more leads and sales:



(Image Source)

If you are conducting SEO for e-commerce, you can't skip on producing quality content.

It's a great way to rank for a variety of long-tail keywords and signal your website's relevance to search engines.

Most e-commerce platforms allow you to set up a blog under the same domain name so the online store can fully benefit from the â€œSEO juiceâ€ generated by the content.

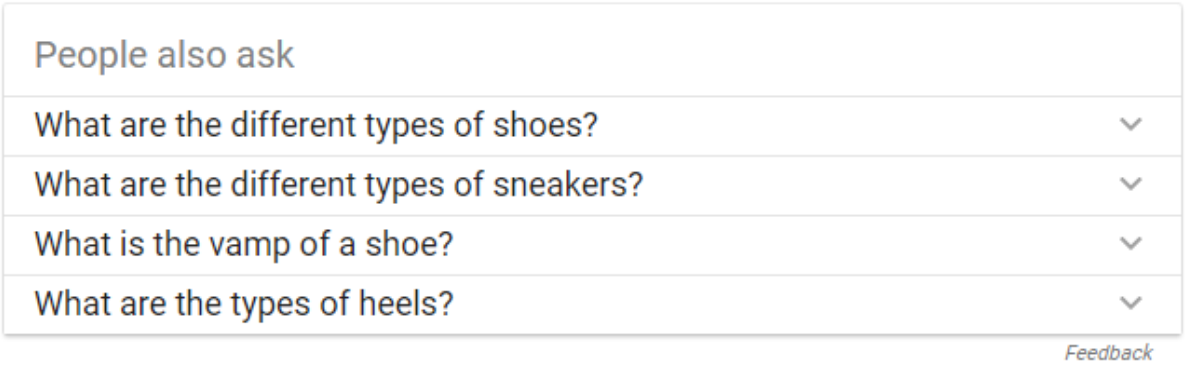
Here are some ways to improve e-commerce SEO with content publishing.

Featured Answers/Answer Boxes on Google

When it comes to creating content, ideas are scarce. Especially ones that other bloggers haven't already beaten into the ground.

And sometimes, those topics and keywords aren't a reflection of real searches.

Using existing Google search result boxes, you can actually see content that users are actively searching for:

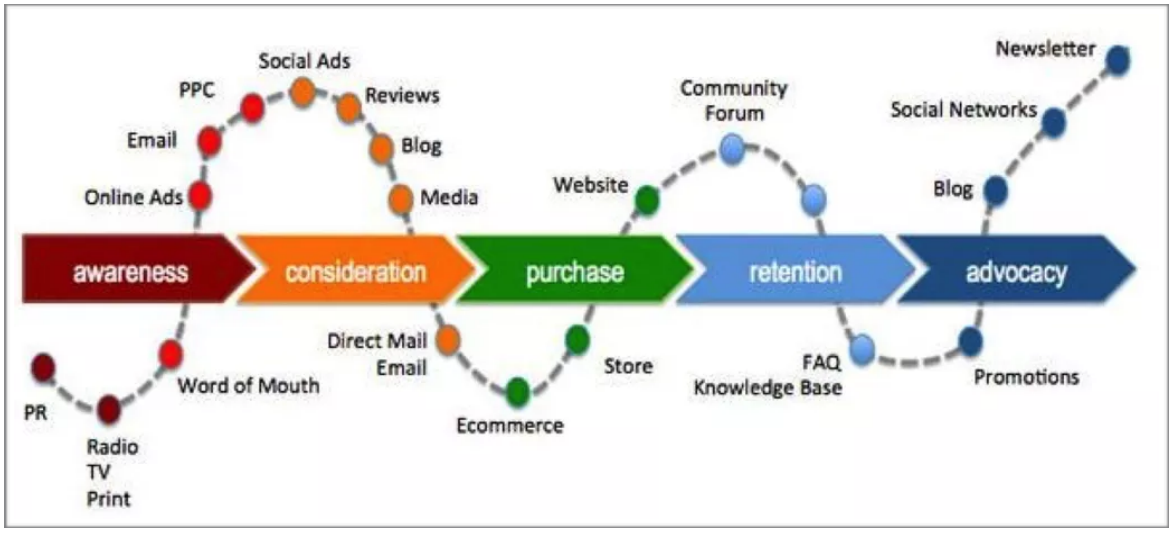


Search for topics within your e-commerce niche and see which questions are frequently asked.

Use these to create videos, blog posts, and content revolving around the most frequently asked questions in your business.

Funnel-Based Content Types

Modern-day buyers follow a complex series of actions before making any concrete decisions. This system is generally known as the buyer's journey.



([Image Source])

No longer are the days of consumers making instant purchasing decisions in stores.

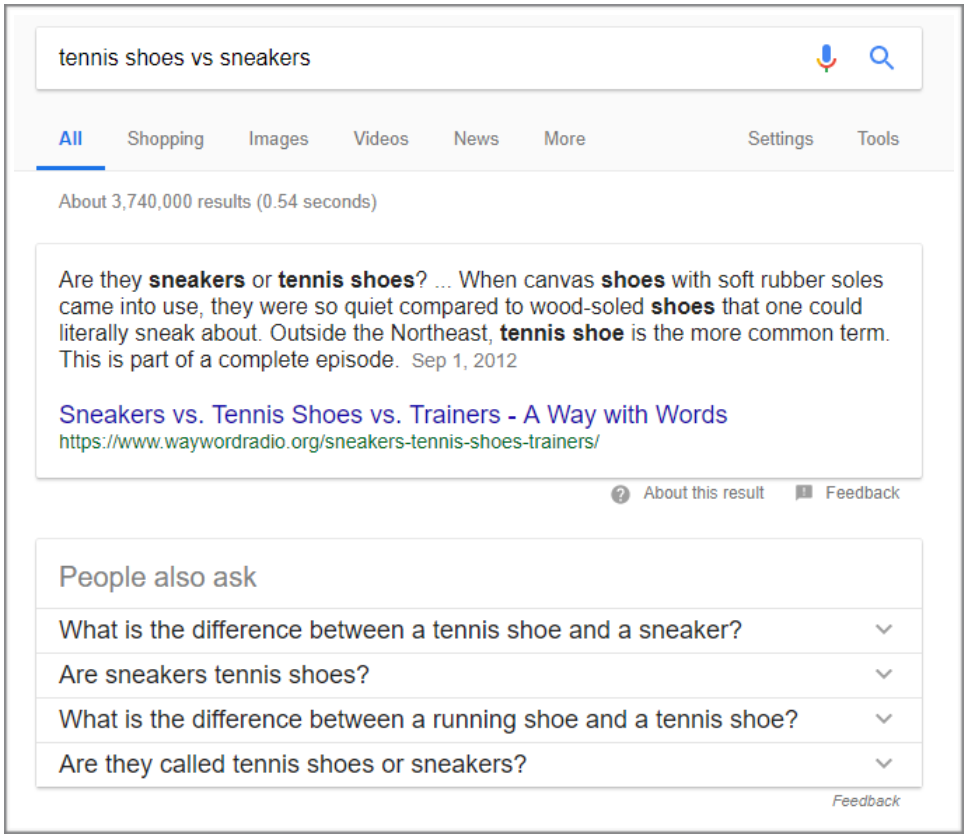
People don't buy immediately because they don't have to anymore.

They can fully research their decisions before coming to a purchase.

To capitalize on this for SEO, you need to segment content to appeal to all stages of the buyer's journey:

Awareness, consideration, and decision.

For the awareness stage, focus on content that helps answer fundamental questions of someone looking to buy a product in your space:



For example, a user who doesn't yet know the difference between tennis shoes, sneakers, and trainers isn't going to buy from you.

Rather, they want you to educate them first.

As they move down the funnel, you can start to produce content focused on specific shoe types within those niches, closing the deal with a call-to-action offer in the decision stage.

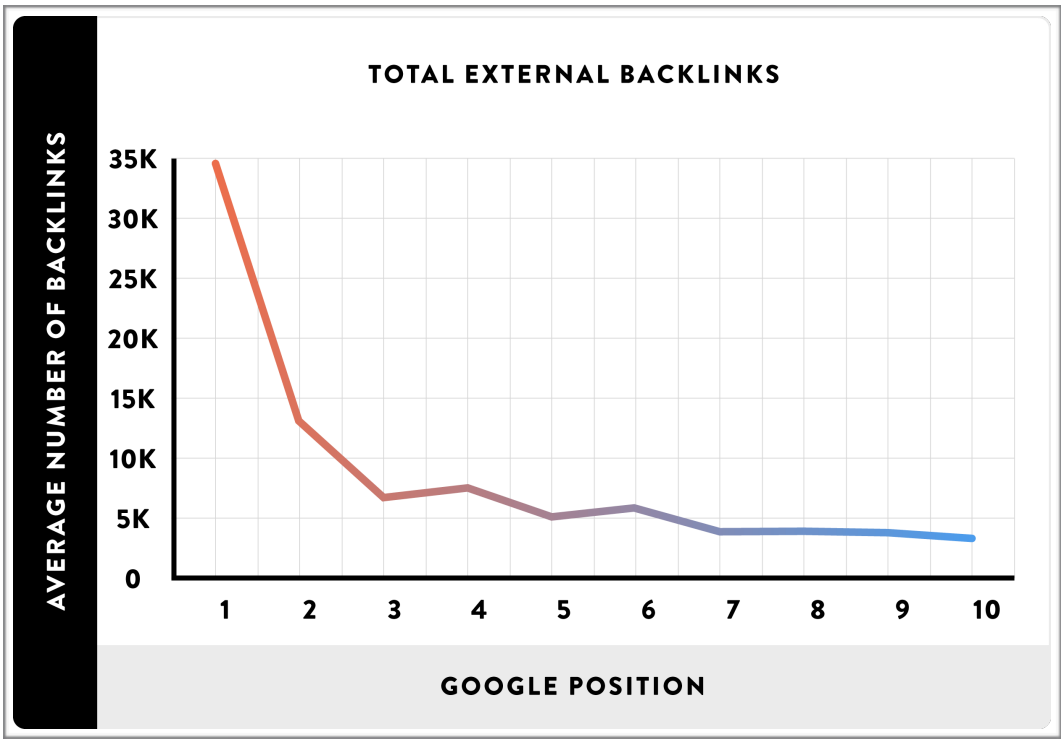
The idea here is to bring in new inbound traffic that wants to learn about your industry and product niche, slowly moving them from awareness to purchase decision.

Link Building For E-Commerce

According to Google, links and content are a the top two ranking factors (in no particular order).

Links are critical to signaling relevance, building trust and authority and driving relevant referral traffic.

Links are critical to ranking. Backlinko found a direct correlation between total links and organic rankings:



(Image Source)

Here are a few ways you'll want to get links to your e-commerce site:

Create Linkable Content

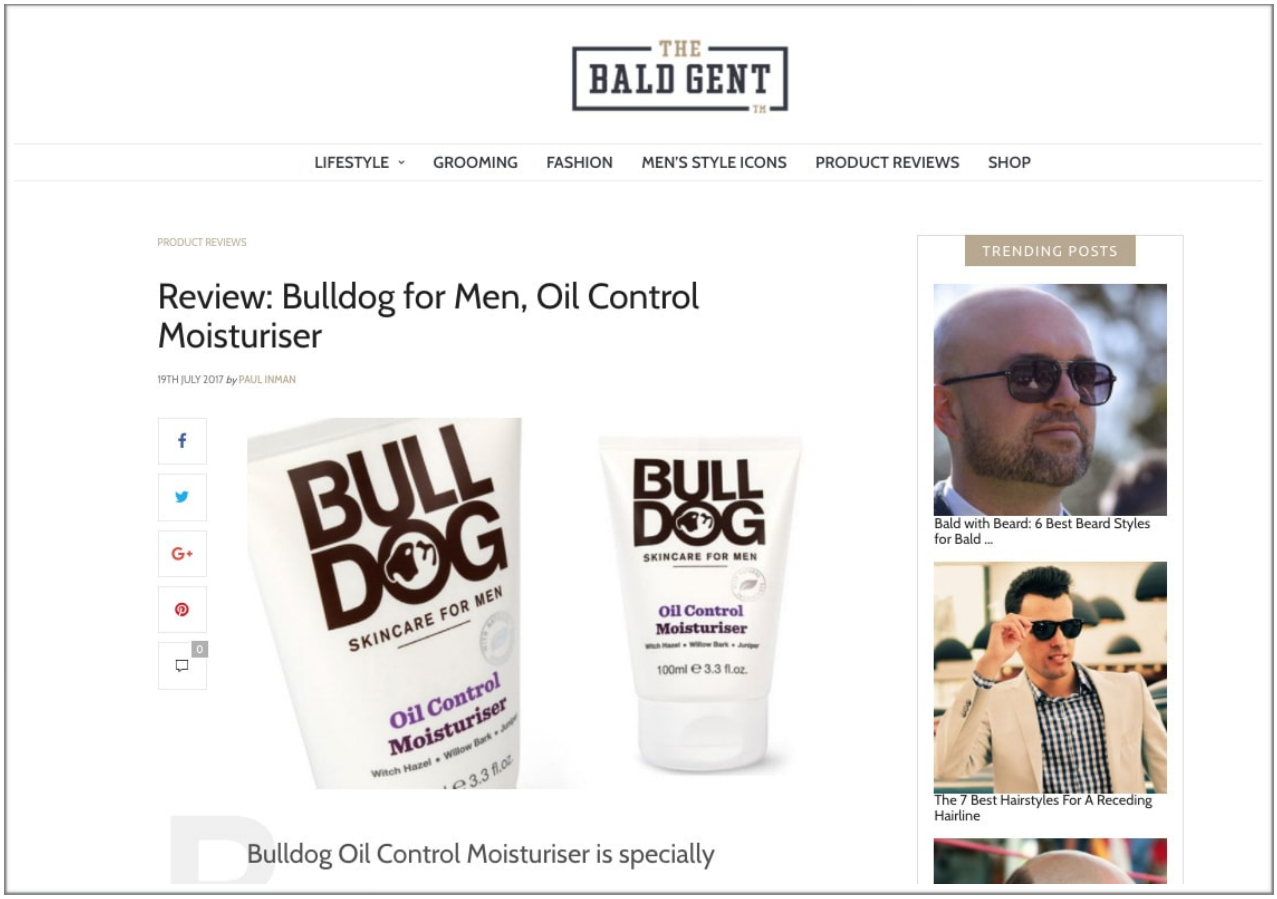
And creating content is one of easiest ways to build high quality links.

It's much harder to get direct links to your products than it is to drive links and referral traffic to a blog post or video.

As you develop your blog, you can start to campaign for links by reaching out to other popular blogs, product review and comparison sites and more.

Send Products To Review Blogs

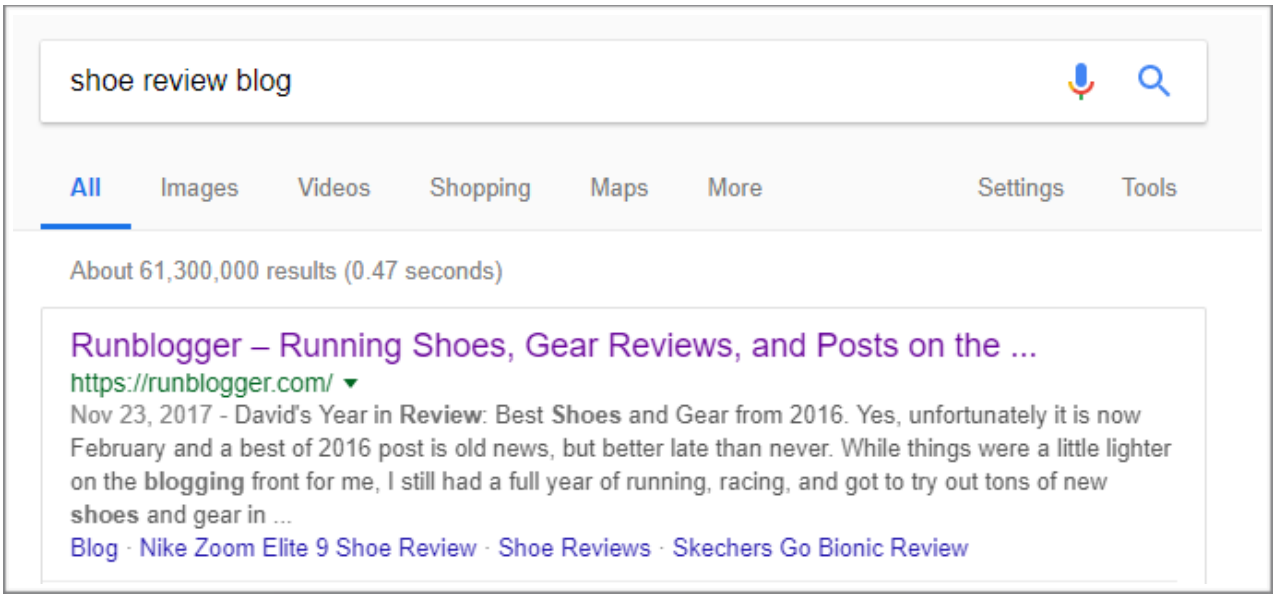
Try reaching out to review blogs and sending them free products:



(Image Source)

It's an excellent way to spend a few bucks with a high chance of generating links.

Conduct a basic search on Google and look for reviewers in your e-commerce niche. Contact them and send them free products without asking for a review.



This will likely land you a few great reviews and subsequent links that can help you drive relevant referral traffic.

Get Links From Product Manufacturers

If you're selling branded products, you can sometimes get a link from the manufacturer under an "authorized retailers" type page. Check out the websites of your manufacturers and try to get a link there.

Don't Forget Internal Links

The honest truth is that it's difficult to get people to link to your product pages, so internal linking in e-commerce is really important. Build linkable assets, then internally link from them to your product pages.

Conclusion

Organic search is one of the best ways to get in front of your ideal customers in a cost-effective way over the long-run.

By following this guide, you'll be way ahead of your competition!

Any questions or additional suggestions? Let us know in the comments!