# THE PHOTOGRAPHER'S
# GUIDE TO SEO

PhotoShelter

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*Cover Photo Credit: Peter Wey*

THE PHOTOGRAPHER'S GUIDE TO SEO

# INTRO

This is the sixth guide to Search Engine Optimization(SEO) we've created. The first one was back in 2009, and the online world has changed dramatically since then. Search engines continue to evolve, their algorithms are always getting smarter and keeping up with it all is an actual full time job for many people.

At PhotoShelter, part of our job is to respond to these changes so that our members don't have to. Search engines are a vital source of traffic and bring much-needed exposure for photographers. We see this every day with our own site at www.photoshelter.com. SEO brings in 40% of all of our site traffic - that's double any other single source.

Many of the tips, tricks and best practices shared in this guide come from the lessons we've learned along the way. We feel it's important to share what we've learned so that you can get a better understanding of how search engines work, and so that you can apply this information to your own websites.

There is a lot of useful and important SEO information in this guide. If it seems overwhelming, it might be helpful to understand the big picture – what Google is looking for – so that you can provide exactly that. It's not complicated. And you're already doing it. High quality content. That's all. Google's business is all about bringing the best, most relevant, highest valued content to people as quickly as possible.

As photographers, we are lucky. We have a superpower. We are visual content creators, and images are probably the highest valued content there is. So the hardest part is already done. The rest is all about being smart about exposing and explaining your content to the search engines who are hungry for it.

In this guide we will show you how these algorithms work, and what they are looking for. We will explain all the clues they use to indicate quality content, and we will give you suggestions on how to make it easier and faster for them to find it.

Beyond the technical how-to's we share here, it's important to not lose sight of what really matters. Your content is an extension of you, a creative individual. You are unique, you have your own style and way of seeing the world. Being yourself has never been more rewarding than it is today.

It is my hope that with this guide, you'll be able to use these search engines to stand out from the crowd, find the audience that's right for you and make the most of your visual talents.


– Grover Sanschagrin
*PhotoShelter General Manager & Co-Founder*

*© Marin Headlands*

PART I :

# Google Basics

# Search Engine 101

If you've been around long enough to remember the days of quickly loading another roll of film into your camera mid-shoot, or the hours spent culling and post-processing client selects without the help of an editing software, you might remember what the world was like without search engines. For the rest of us, Google — and even Yahoo! and Bing — have been indelible parts of our Internet routines, from the moment we sat down at our boxy Gateway desktops, to now, as we're seamlessly accessing content on-the-go from our smartphones. Per day, Google handles 5.6 billion user searches — quite a feat for what began as a research project and grew into the foremost media company in the world.

While Google continues to expand its reach across the web, it hasn't strayed far from the critical components that started it all: SEO, or Search Engine Optimization. After a few core updates to its products — including the addition of Gmail, Google Maps and Google Chrome in the early 2000s — the current iteration of Google we live and breathe now is a veritable answer machine. Every day, new updates to the way Google indexes web content are tacked onto its complicated but flexible algorithm, constantly upping the stakes for those looking to optimize their online presence.

The websites that appear on the first page of results aren't there by chance. In an age of digital content, how do webmasters and creators set themselves apart against millions of relevant results? The answer is SEO.

According to Search Engine Journal, 28.5% of people click on the first Google search result. The second and third results rank at a 15% and 11% click-through rate respectively. Behaviorally, people are far more likely to refine a search if they don't find what they're looking for on the first page. So what does that mean for you?

Whether you're building your brand, increasing your bookings, or simply trying to get a hand in the game, your first concern should be SEO. Although the major search engines are continually updating their algorithms, the fundamentals that govern SEO remain unchanged. For the purposes of this guide, our primary focus is on Google, which dominates roughly 86% of the search engine market share in the United States and 92% worldwide. If your efforts are successful, you'll see results in other search engines as well.

This guide is designed to be the cornerstone of your SEO strategy, but keep in mind that you should be geared toward the long play. Put simply, your SEO strategy is a marathon, not a sprint.

*© Per Swantesson*

# Why Bother with SEO?

With the onset of new tech comes variances in search trends and behaviors, all of which are factored into the updates search engines introduce to their core algorithms on a daily basis. Without this evolution, Google would quickly fall out-of-sync with a searcher's expectations and intentions. But a fundamental flaw with search engines is that they're based on algorithms, which don't necessarily correspond with a true human experience.

In the early days of Google, a searcher might enter a query for a particular pair of shoes. Now, rather than parsing through pages of data to find the cheapest option from the most reputable wholesaler, Google's universal search takes into account search intent. Given the phrase someone uses to search, Google can detect whether or not someone needs informational, navigational or transactional content. Instead of sifting through pages of potential matches, a search for "Nike Air Jordan 1" returns options to purchase that pair of shoes from a variety of trusted sources because Google detects transactional intent.

 If that same searcher refines the search using the phrase "history of Nike Air Jordan 1," Google detects informational intent and returns in-depth guides to the complete history of the shoe. One step further, and searching for "where to buy Nike Air Jordan I" returns listings of nearby stores that carry the product with the top results placed handily on an accompanying Google Map.

So why does intent matter? Regardless of your primary concerns or where you are in your SEO strategy, webmasters and content owners should keep in mind that each searcher is unique though many may share the same intent. Learning how to target specific areas of your site that pertain to your ideal audience, their intent and your likelihood of ranking high on result pages is all part of the long play.

*© Marin Headlands*

# Common Terminology

To dig deep into SEO, you should be familiar with a few key terms:

**SERP:** The "Search Engine Result page" is the aggregated content returned by a search engine after a search query.

**ORGANIC SEARCH:** A free listing in Google Search that appears because it's relevant to a user's search terms. Results that are denoted with the text "Ad" are not organic results.

**PAGE TITLE:** The text that appears in the active browser tab when viewing a webpage.

**META DESCRIPTION:** A brief, succinct description of the contents of a particular webpage.

**SITEMAP:** A packet containing all of the webpages on a website detailing the links to each page and the relationship between those pages. The sitemap is a technical document that can be manually submitted to Google.

**CRAWL:** The action performed by bots wherein pages of a website are scanned for content. Google calls their crawler "Googlebot."

**INDEX:** A page is indexed by Google if it has been visited by a crawler and can be returned in a search result if deemed relevant and trustworthy.

**BACKLINKS:** A link from another site that leads to a page on your site. Consider these virtual endorsements that help Google determine if your site contains good content.

**KEYWORDS:** Terms and phrases in your web content that make it possible for people to find your site via search engines. Optimized keywords should "speak the same language" as a site's intended audience.

**ANCHOR TEXT:** The visible, clickable text in an HTML hyperlink. Anchor Text helps Google decipher the content behind the hyperlink. If someone backlinks to your gallery of travel photos and the anchor text used is "Mount Fuji Landscape Gallery," Google receives more direct context for the link.

**WEB HOST:** Web hosting is a service that allows someone to post a website or a web page on the Internet. Web hosts have networks of servers that help serve your website over a browser (Google Chrome, Safari, Firefox, etc.)


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PhotoShelter
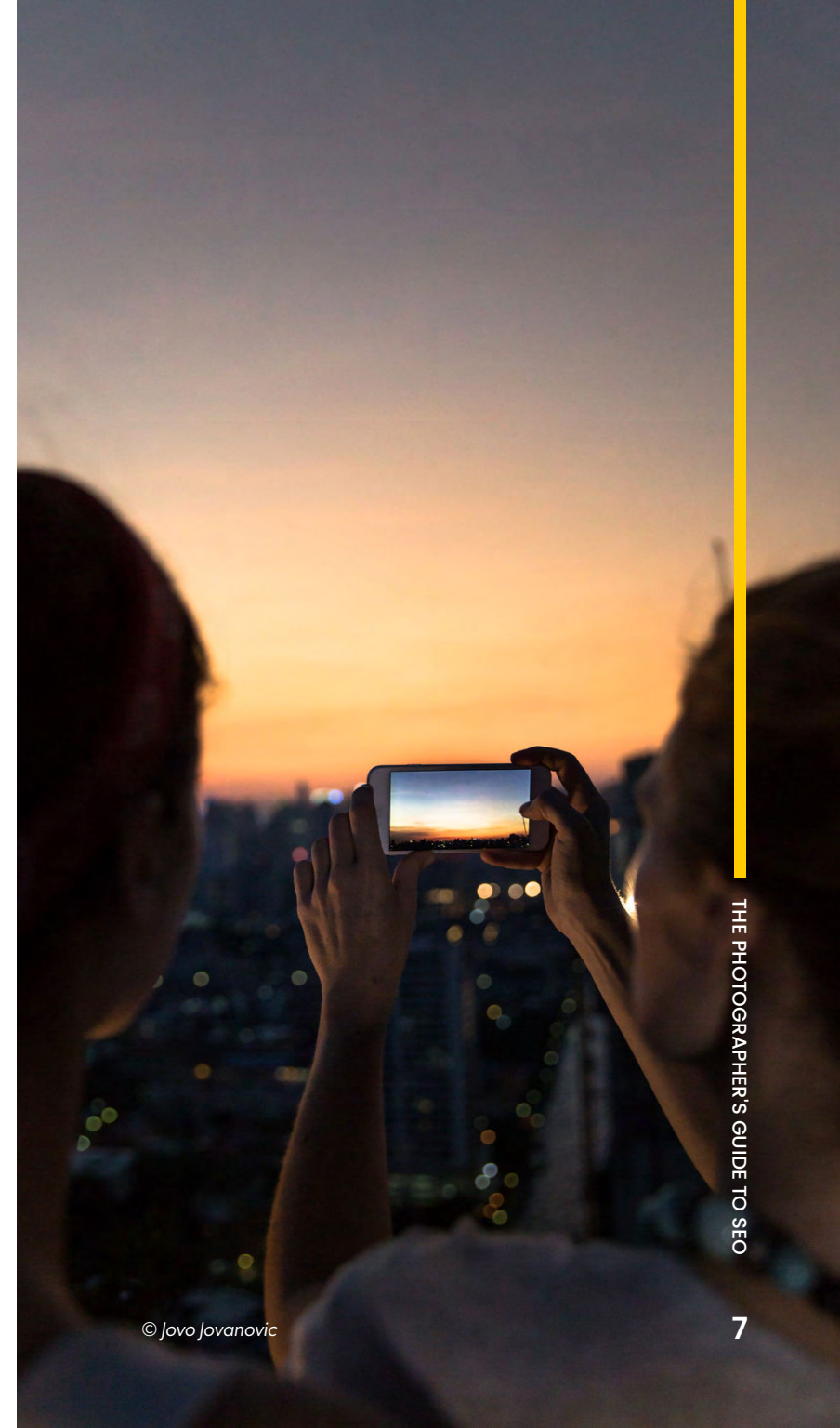
# What Factors Influence SEO?

Google uses signals within its algorithm to factor in determinants for what content appears in a search result. As of early 2020, there are over 200 signals used by Google that can influence your page rank. Because there are so many of these signals, they tend to carry equal weight, but you might find some are more in your control than others. A good acronym to remember is E-A-T: Expertise, Authoritativeness, Trustworthiness.

We make sure to include a breakdown of both on- and off-site factors that influence your SEO in our SEO Best Practices tutorial. While it's impossible for us to cover each of the 200 signals currently used by Google, the few mentioned here are great starting points.

## EXPERTISE
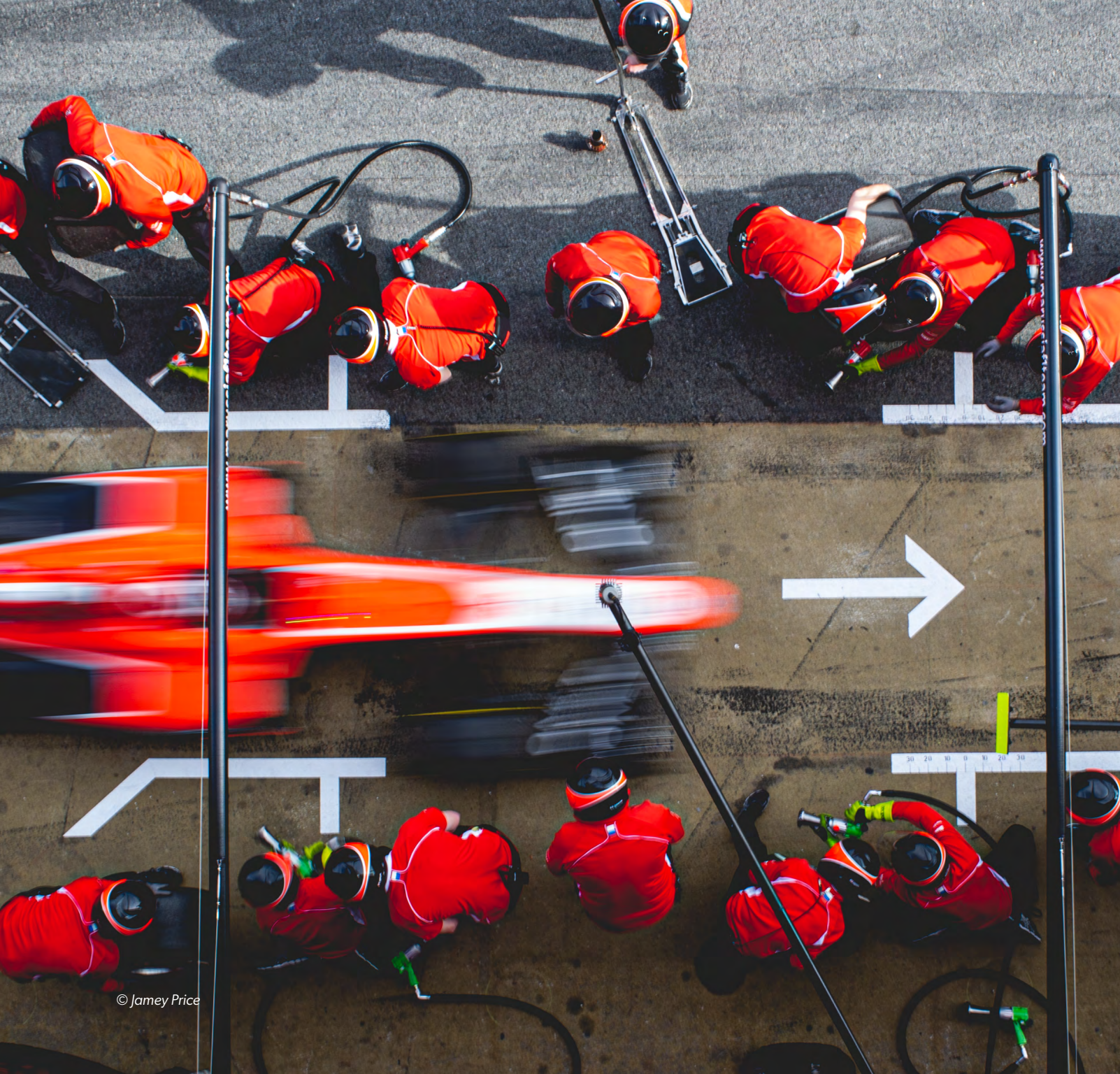
- *Content quality*
- *Dwell time*
- *On-page SEO*

## AUTHORITATIVENESS

- *Organic click-through rate*
- *Mobile-usabilty*
- *Content Updates*

## TRUSTWORTHINESS

- *Referring domains*
- *Domain authority*
- *Total number of backlinks*

*© Santi Nunez*

PhotoShelter

© Jamey Price

# How Fast Can I Expect Results?

estimates it can take between four months to a year for your SEO improvements to become noticeable. While some may see changes in a few weeks, most SEO experts advise that a well-optimized site should be reflected in the page rankings after three months. Because there are so many signals factored into how Google finds your site, and so much content on the Internet for Google to crawl, don't be discouraged if your immediate attempts aren't instantly reflected in your searches.

Incorporating a diligent SEO strategy into your workflow and understanding the basics of how that strategy plays out over time will put you in a position to make measured changes to your keywords and site content in order to reach and maintain your own intent, just like a searcher would. An optimized site is also flexible. Toward the end of this guide, we'll cover benchmarking, which should help you sustain your strategy over the course of your site's lifecycle.

# What You See Isn't What Others See

Intent affects search results in a variety of ways, as does the search history and geographic location of a searcher. Google collects the last 180 days of a user's search history using browser cookie records, then uses that data to anticipate the results someone might be looking for. This is where learning to be flexible and adaptable — and anticipate trends — comes into play for you.

Understanding how Google filters results with intent and preference at top of mind can dramatically improve your ability to keyword for your specific audience. But keep in mind that while someone in Seattle might search for "wildlife stock photography" and see your site listed as the first result, someone in Maine will undoubtedly see something else. Even more drastic is the difference in results displayed when someone searches for a potential family photographer to hire. Results near that searcher's geographic location will display first, so while you might be a travel family photographer with service areas available everywhere, Google is less likely to display your site if someone is searching for "Omaha family photographers." Focusing your keywords and strategy toward local SEO can be a game-changer for your business.

© Nathan Yan

# 16 Ways to Optimize Your Site

# BASIC

We recommend breaking down your site optimization into actionable steps. Below, we've outlined 16 ways to do just that. If you're a novice, use our Basic steps to begin incorporating your SEO strategy into your workflow. If you've been building up your SEO over time and have a good understanding of the basics, we've included some Expert level tips to guide your analytical and brand objectives.

## 1. KNOW YOUR AUDIENCE

For those just getting started, defining your audience is often the most crucial part of the SEO puzzle. Even if you have a good sense for who visits your site, it's important to revisit the question often to accommodate new search trends. Your audience informs everything from your keyword use to your pricing and all the bits in between. Recognizing trends in your audience and making continual adjustments to your strategy helps you consider the more granular aspects of who visits your site and why, allowing you to craft a strategy that drives more traffic over time.

As you begin to consider your strategy, ask yourself who, what and how:

### Who are your competitors?

Run a Google search for a few of the keywords you use. Pay close attention to how other photographers use keywords to target their audience and how successful their strategy is.

### What social media platforms does your target audience primarily use?

If you find that your target audience is more active on Instagram, consider developing your social media presence by changing your profile over to a Business profile. Engage with your followers frequently.

### How do your clients find you?

Consider your local market. Does your community have a forum or coffee shop where services or artists are posting ads or business cards? Are you primarily hired for gigs via your Google My Business profile or via your site? Are your efforts too far-reaching? Would dialing in on your proximal market be a better approach?

Think of this step as a way to create buyer personas for your business. Begin with, "My ideal client is…" and work from there. Keep in mind that people ask questions in different ways, so your strategy should be general at first, but specific to your niche and your target audience. While it might be tempting to want your work to reach everybody, it's far more realistic to focus on a small piece of the puzzle and then broaden your reach. The more insight you have on your audience, the more efficient your SEO strategy will be.

## 2. MAKE SURE YOUR WEBSITE APPEARS PROPERLY IN SEARCH RESULTS

Few people run a search without knowing what type of content they're looking for. Your search result is the first impression you make to a potential client. If it looks inconsistent or unprofessional, people aren't likely to click through to your site. Some of the most important elements of your search result and your SEO strategy are your page titles and meta descriptions, which help define the relevant content of pages on your site and increase your site's overall searchability. Note that these fields do not display on the page, but are plugged into the header tags that make up the code Google crawls when indexing your site.

### Page Titles

A Page Title is a short description of a particular webpage and is displayed on the active browser tab. Google recommends limiting the title to 70 characters or less and also recommends putting the most important terms in your title toward the front:
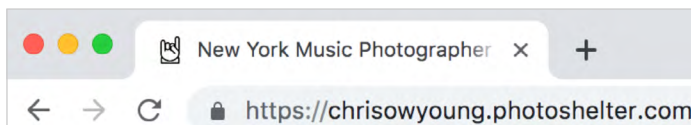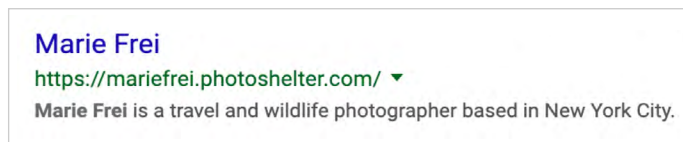


For example:

- **Bad:** David Growl Photography | A Photo That's Fit to Print!
- **Good:** Chicago Music & Venue Photographer | David Growl

### Meta Descriptions

The second part of your search result is the Meta Description, which displays below the link to your site:



Google will truncate the Meta Description to about 160 characters, so be concise and succinct in the way you describe your site and don't exceed three sentences. Think in terms of your overall photographic style, your services offered, service location, as well as your name or the name of your business. You might also consider using alternative terms to define otherwise broad subjects. For instance, in the example above, Marie uses the term "wildlife photographer" instead of "nature photographer." You might find that varying your word usage helps give you an edge in more unique searches.

If you're a PhotoShelter member, you can make adjustments to your Page Title and Meta Description directly in the Site Builder. Note that each page on your site has its own Page Title and Meta Description field, so be sure to fill out each one. You can use the same title or description on each page, or you can make adjustments to each unique field to reflect the relevant information on a given page. Ideally, you should think of one keyword to include on each page that's unique to the content there.

### More PhotoShelter Tips

Gallery and collection pages will automatically populate the Meta Description using the gallery and collection descriptions. The gallery or collection name will become the Page Title.

ALT Text, short for "alternative text," is used to describe an image for those who are visually impaired and also conveys context about a given image to Google's crawlers. PhotoShelter will use the "Description/Caption" field in the IPTC metadata for your images as the alt text. These alt texts will load if the photo does not and are also included in your sitemap.

# 77% 🔍
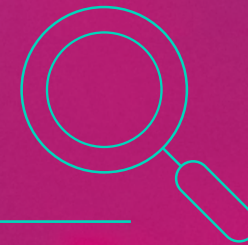
*of mobile searches occur from home or while at work, places* **where a computer is usually present**

© Robert Kohlhuber

## 3. USE A MOBILE-READY WEBSITE

There's no doubt that Internet users are leaning toward using smartphones as their primary device. According to Google, 77% of mobile searches occur from home or while at work, places where a computer is usually present. This tendency to lean toward mobile search plays into another crucial aspect of your SEO strategy: mobile-usability. On a non mobile-friendly site, the content on webpages might be too small to read, or navigation elements might be too close together. Google uses its algorithm to determine which sites are more mobile-friendly than others, giving preference in SERPs to sites with strong usability scores.

Responsive sites are able to adjust to a variety of screen sizes. If you're a PhotoShelter member, you likely use one of our responsive templates already. While we're certainly always making improvements to our templates as usability trends arise, all of our available responsive templates are considered mobile-friendly by Google.

© Suzi Eszterhas

**PhotoShelter**
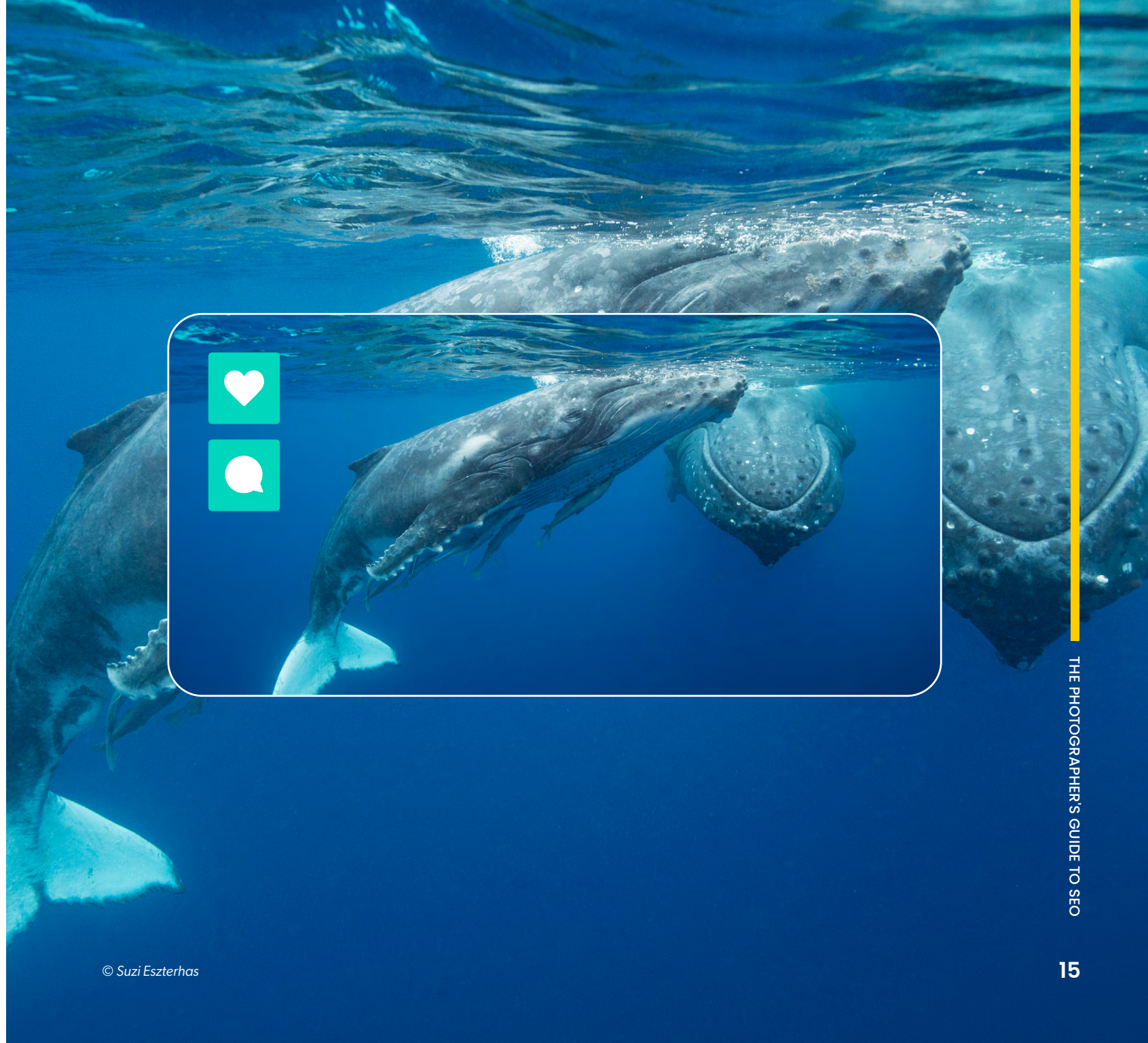
## Damari McBride Photography

Website    Save

5.0 ★★★★★ 5 Google reviews

**Hours: Open 24 hours** ▾

**Phone:** (616) 432-7768

**Appointments:** damarimcbride.com

⚠ Hours or services may differ

Suggest an edit · Own this business?

Know this place? Share the latest info

## Questions & answers

Be the first to ask a question

Ask a question

## Reviews ⓘ

Write a review    Add a photo

"You can see he clearly puts passion into his **work** - and is so humble about it ."

"Damari brings art and photography together, capturing essence."

"Definitely hire him as a **photographer**, you won't be disappointed!"

View all Google reviews

## From Damari McBride Photography

"Portrait and Documentary Photographer based in Brooklyn."

### *4. PRIORITIZE CONTENT FOR LOCAL SEO*

Mobile-usability contributes to yet another important consideration when optimizing your site for SEO: local SEO. In the US alone, 94% of Internet users with smartphones search for local information. When your client searches for "industry + location" Google delivers relevant search results based on location data from the device, relying on signals like local content, social profile pages, backlinks and citations. Primarily, you should be concerned with three things:

**Relevance:** Use keywords that indicate a locality. Google will consider how well a local listing matches a user's search terms. The more niche and specific you can be in your metadata, the more Google will have to work with when trying to match a search query with relevant results in its indices.

**Proximity:** Google uses mobile location data as well as search terms for a geographic area to narrow down search results. You might notice next time you Google "takeout + type of takeout + city" that restaurants are ranked by distance. If you service multiple cities or travel for assignments, consider adding your homebase in your meta description, but also include any relevant location data in the IPTC metadata of your images.

**Prominence:** Just like it sounds, Google considers the favorability of your site. Active and recent engagement on social media pages, citations or backlinks to your site from other reputable sites, and social media activity can all contribute to how Google measures your site prominence. While it may be nerve-wracking to boast about your skills and services on social media, take the time to consider how important local SEO is to your business. It's especially critical if you're looking to be hired for local opportunities or widen your audience. Approach social media as a chance to introduce yourself and your services to a total stranger.

Setting up a Google My Business profile can help provide useful metrics and increase the relevancy and prominence of your business. Your profile will allow you to engage with your client throughout the customer lifecycle which can often signal to Google that your listing is relevant, prominent and recent.

Google My Business allows you to create a minimal landing page, offers booking features and includes tools for you to engage with your audience. Your profile also stays top-of-mind as Google displays it in the right panel alongside the search results.

## 5. PUBLISH CONTENT FREQUENTLY

Whether you're a stock photographer, commercial photographer or family and lifestyle photographer, you likely spend the majority of your time shooting. In your downtime, consider updating your portfolio to include new and relevant work. Google favors certain search results using the concept of Quality Deserves Freshness. Regularly adding content to your website helps enlarge your digital footprint while giving you an edge of freshness in the eyes of the search engines. You might not notice a change in your overall SEO at first, as Google will take a few weeks to crawl and re-index your site. However, the more new pages and new content you add, the better freshness score you'll receive.

Publishing content frequently also allows you to link back to your site and draw attention to new work you're displaying. If you've been on the internet long enough, chances are you've probably posted on a forum. Forums, blogs, industry trade sites and social media groups are great ways to advertise your business and backlink to your website. For photographers, there are seemingly an endless number of industry forums, gear blogs and media tools used to facilitate communication between photography professionals. These trade sites often have great existing domain strength and are authoritative voices within the industry, so focusing some of your strengths here can often be a boon.

*© Julie Dermansky*

# INTERMEDIATE

© Song Heming

### 6. CREATE A KEYWORD LIST

IPTC keywords are a combination of words and phrases that give context to your images. Without these keywords, a search engine crawler won't index an image because it lacks readable content, so consider this a critical step in tightening your SEO.  Most of your time will be spent drafting a keyword list and making changes to that list over time. While it's certainly one of the more mundane aspects of your workflow, you'll find a groove and improve your keywording strategy over time.

While it's tempting to toss as many variations of the same basic keywords into your IPTC metadata, this can actually be harmful to your overall SEO. It also doesn't give you much of an edge in an otherwise highly competitive market.

A good place to start is to make a list of 20-50 keywords and phrases that you want your website to rank for. Start with general terms, then move onto more niche keywords and specific phrasing that will set you apart. You should have a combination of "head terms" (phrases of 3 or fewer keywords) and "long tail terms." For example, let's say you're a wedding photographer in Philadelphia.

The following keywords might appear on your list:

- philadelphia wedding photographer
- philly wedding photographer
- wedding photographer in philly
- ambler wedding photographer
- wedding photographers near temple university
- cheap wedding photographers in philly
- best philadelphia wedding photographer

Using colloquial language like "philly" and more specific terms like "ambler" (a Philadelphia suburb) will likely drive more diverse traffic to your website. Certain terms can imply different intent. For example, "philly wedding photographer price" is more indicative of someone ready to hire a photographer, and thus a more qualified customer than someone who searches for "wedding photography examples."

For content that's more niche and less location-specific (think editorial work), you might consider phrases like:

- fashion editorial photographer
- boutique fashion photographer
- US-based streetwear photographer
- top streetwear editorial photographer

- designer brand editorial photographer
- high-end fashion photographer in new york

If you have repeat clients with strong brand-recognition, consider tossing a few of those brands into your keyword list. A phrase like "NY-based Prada photographer" or "Hypebeast summer editorial photographer" lends itself to more unique searches, increasing the chance that the right searcher finds the right content.

Keep in mind that while you'll revisit your keyword lists frequently, there are a few recommended best practices:

- Separate keywords with a comma and a space

- Don't treat keywords like social media hashtags (i.e. #photooftheday2020, #photooftheday, #houstonwedding)

- Make sure keywords are specific to the content of the image
    - Instead of "dog," try "Italian Greyhound"
    - Supplement a keyword like "Grand Canyon" with a specific location or landmark  (e.g. "Maricopa Point" or "Grand Canyon Maricopa Point")

- Don't stuff your keywords with irrelevant or generalized terms
    - Google and other search engine algorithms consider this practice "keyword stuffing" and they tend to penalize sites for this. If your photo of a dog contains the keyword "nature photography," you probably won't rank high in search results.
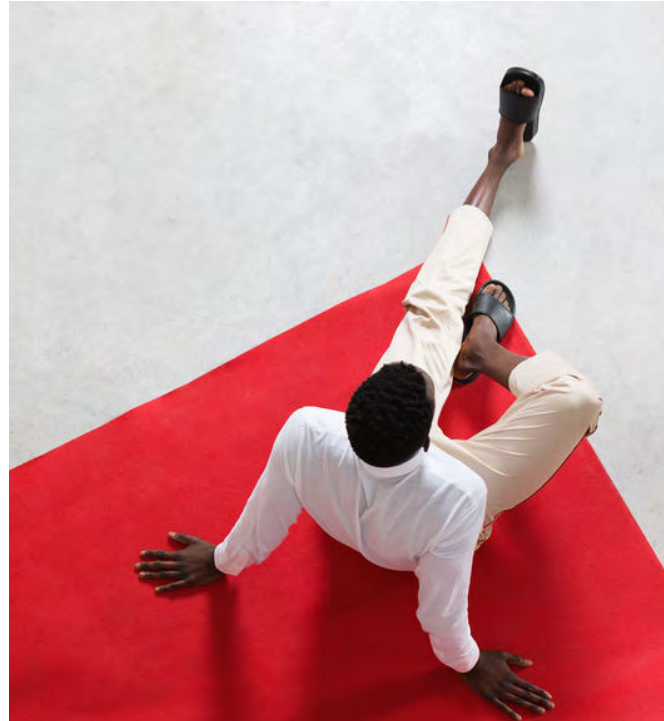


*© BONNINSTUDIO*

Keywording directly correlates with how well you know your audience. If a potential client wants to find a wedding photographer in Philadelphia, what are the key terms they'll include in a search? The list of results for your keyword list can help you gauge the competitiveness of your niche and provide quantitative guidelines to displace them in the future.

## 7. KNOW YOUR COMPETITORS

Keywords can make or break you, but so can your competitors. If you find that you're not ranking as high as other photographers in your area, examine what might set them apart. Are they using keywords that offer a service a potential client may not have considered before? Are they using enough keywords to show up in a Google search for a generic search query? Google's auto-populate feature might prove to be a huge asset for you here, as you can get a good sense of the most popular searches for a given phrase:
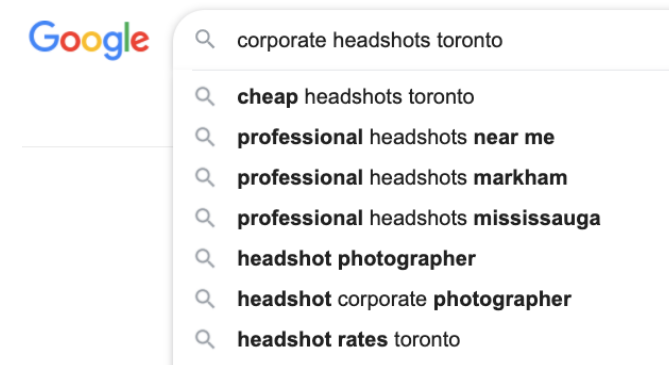


A good tip is to vary your keywords to include synonyms, but try not to strike the same chord twice. You can get a good sense of unique buzzwords by running a search for photographers within your specialty. Whereas one corporate

headshot photographer might use the phrase "business headshots," another might use "employee portraits." Rather than trying to diversify your keyword terms with phrases like "business headshots NY" and "business headshots new york," think about distinctive ways to describe what you do. It's important to remind yourself that clients don't think like photographers, so use language that resonates with your targeted audience.

## 8. STREAMLINE YOUR METADATA WORKFLOW

There are other details embedded in your photographs — and across your site — that can have a direct impact on your SEO. Most photographers use software to cull, process and curate their images. Lightroom, Capture One and Photo Mechanic offer the ability to apply IPTC metadata to your photos. Certain metadata is more important to have than others, but as best practice, we recommend being consistent with the fields you choose to fill out.

If you're a PhotoShelter member, make sure that your images are marked as publicly searchable after you have finished populating the SEO-relevant IPTC fields. This gives Google and other search engines access to crawl and index your images.

### DESCRIPTION/CAPTION
Short description that identifies the who, what, when, where and why depicted in an image.

### TITLE
A shorthand reference for the photo. Consider what you'd rename your image if it were hanging in a museum.

### HEADLINE
Briefly summarize the caption. Be more specific than Title, but less specific than Description.

### KEYWORDS
Terms and phrases that identify the content of an image.

### COPYRIGHT
The owner of the copyright to an image.

### IMAGE CREDITS
In 2018, Google Images began weighing rights-related metadata when crawling the web. The resulting "image credits" section displays metadata from the following fields, often referred by different terms across various photo editing software:

**Author** (Creator, or Creator/Photographer)
**Credit/Provider** (Credit, or Credit Line)
**Web Statement URL** (Copyright Info URL, Copyright URL)
**Licensor URL** (URL)

© Leander Nardin

## 9. CATER YOUR EFFORTS TOWARD THE GOOGLE IMAGE LICENSING PROGRAM

If you're tuned into our blog or follow our social channels, you may have heard about Google's new licensable images features. If you haven't, it's definitely a good idea to become familiar with what's involved and ensure the appropriate areas of your PhotoShelter site and image metadata are ready to go when their program launches.

Now, images with a usage license associated with them will be displayed in Google Images search results with a "Licensable" badge. Clicking on this badge will redirect potential buyers over to your website wherein they can view your licensing terms and potentially license the image for use.

There are two IPTC metadata fields that play a huge role in displaying this content to Google: the Web Statement URL field and the Licensor URL field. Best practice recommends that your Web Statement URL link directly to your licensing terms, and that the Licensor URL field links to your active Contact page. The links you choose to use in these fields don't have to live on your PhotoShelter site, so if you use another site as your primary landing page, you can certainly

point there instead. Just be sure to include the full URL (including the https and the www).

For many PhotoShelter users, the Web Statement URL should be a link to the image licensing agreement provided in our support area. If you have specific or supplemental terms on a custom page of your site that you'd like to link to, feel free to use the URL of the page in this field instead.

**IPTC Metadata** ✎ ▼

**Creation Date:** 2020-07-16 10:40:02 EDT
SEO **Web Statement URL:**
https://www.photoshelter.com/support/license
SEO **Licensor URL:**
https://www.mayorsurveyor.com/contact

If part of your workflow is to add IPTC metadata to your images before uploading to PhotoShelter, please note that we can't guarantee all programs will call these fields by the same name. If you're struggling to find those fields in your photo editing software, look for the following options:

| PRODUCT | IPTC FIELD NAME |
|---|---|
| PhotoShelter | Web Statement URL |
| Lightroom & Photoshop | Copyright Info URL |
| Photo Mechanic | Copyright URL |

| PRODUCT | IPTC FIELD NAME |
|---|---|
| PhotoShelter | Licensor URL |
| Lightroom & Photoshop | *"URL" under "Licensor" (Click to see how to find this field)* |
| Photo Mechanic | *"URL" under "Licensors" (Click to see how to find this field)* |

If you'd like to brush up on Rights Managed and Royalty-Free licensing with PhotoShelter, feel free to check out our tutorials on creating and applying pricing profiles. While you're at it, our selling downloads & licensing tutorials are a great refresher on using our integration with fotoQuote's pricing calculator.

## 10. PARTICIPATE IN SOCIAL MEDIA

It's never easy to dedicate downtime to something like social media, but it can give you a huge boost in site traffic. Plus, it helps you network and leverage your skills if used robustly. Where possible, backlink to your website. Spend some time researching helpful social media plugins or desktop widgets that can help you streamline your web presence. If you're not big into scrolling through a feed, try a social scheduling app like Hootsuite. It's important to publish content frequently, but don't get overwhelmed; an active social media presence leads to more opportunities to attract and engage with new business.

In that same vein, never underestimate the power of a good networking site. If you're a family photographer, sign up for neighborhood forums like NextDoor or follow local groups geared toward parents. If you're a stock photographer, consider following media publishers on LinkedIn. Make it easy for a potential client to connect with you.

*An active social media presence leads to **more opportunities to attract and engage with new business**.*

PhotoShelter

© Kimberly Beck Rubio

# EXPERT

### *11. BACKLINKS*

Your site is the central hub of your web presence. Without backlinks, it's difficult to impossible for someone to happen upon a link to your site organically and hire you for services. This is where backlinking comes in. Generally speaking, search engine algorithms favor sites that are linked to by other reputable sites. This kind of endorsement boosts a search engine's confidence that the content on your site is safe and readable.

The quality of your backlinks outweighs the quantity. Without them, you might have a difficult time boosting yourself to the first few pages of Google. Since your homepage is typically the most-trafficked page of your site, diversify where your backlinks lead. Request backlinks to custom pages on your site, or to particular galleries. If you have a Google My Business profile or a public page on a social network, reach out to your clients to request that they backlink to your site or social profiles. Part of your backlinking strategy should also be concerned with

networking. Offer to write a guest post on a well-known site, community blog or magazine. Established digital publications in your target market are great avenues to widening your audience and increasing site traffic. Don't hesitate to submit to online journals or sites that feature work by prominent contributors in the industry. Sites like PetaPixel, FeatureShoot, the LENS blog and the PhotoShelter blog feature guest work regularly. When your work is featured on a popular site, it inevitably creates a cascade of links from other sites. If it's helpful, draft an email template you can slightly tailor to different publications to make this process easier.

*© Victor Torres*

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## BACKLINKS –

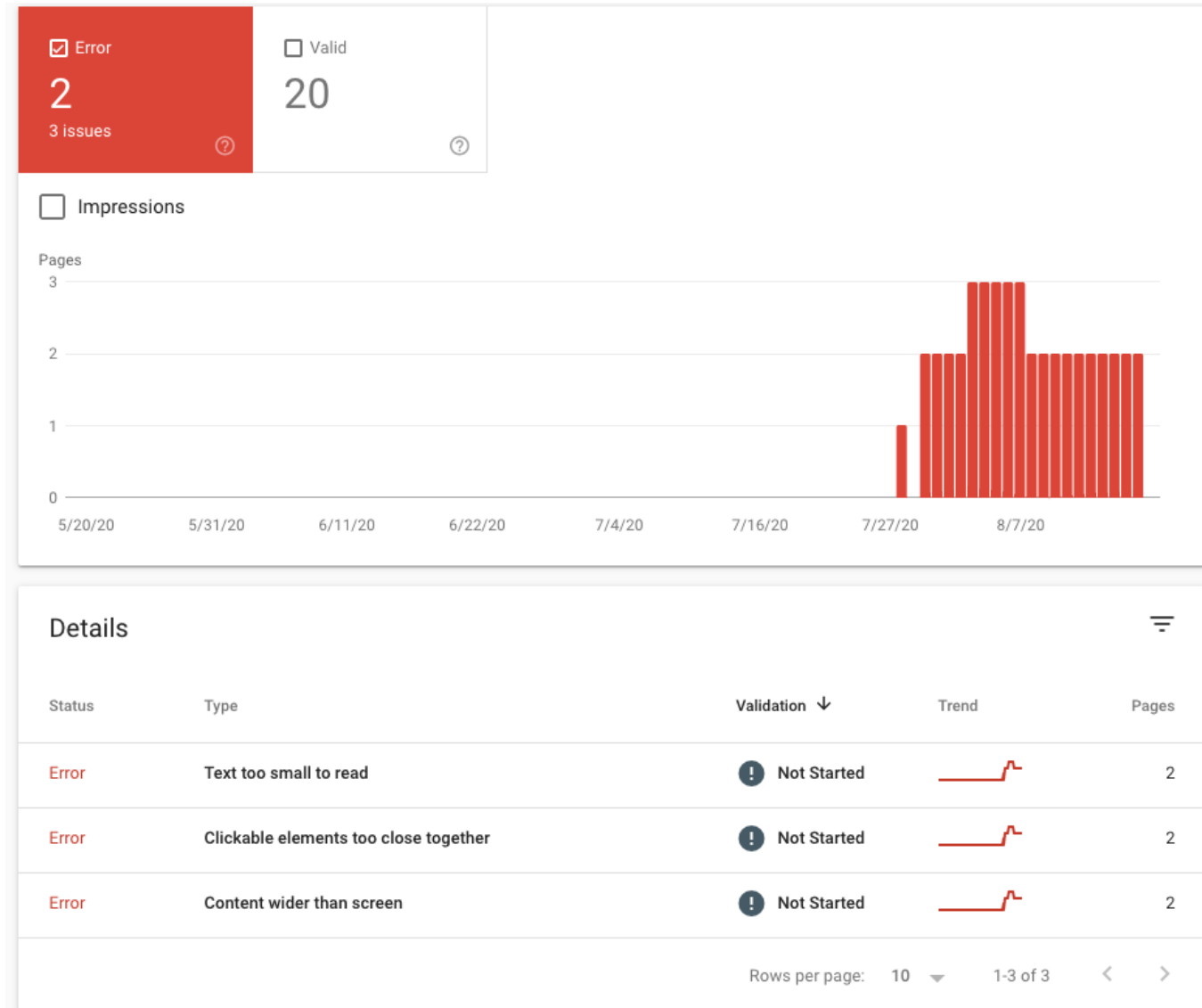Links leading to your website from another website.
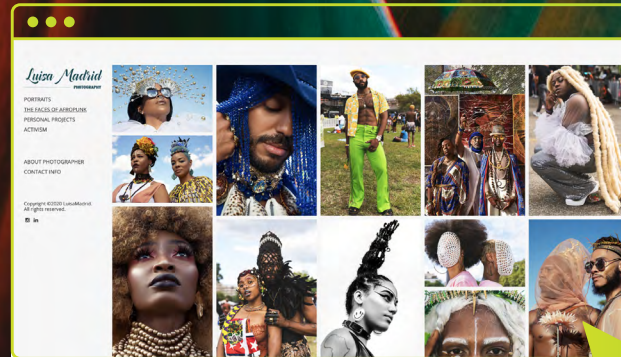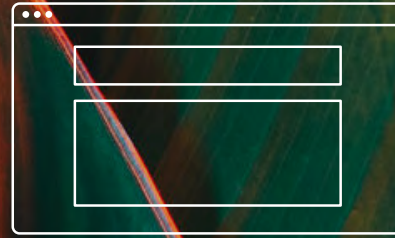


**The better the reputation** of the external site in the eyes of the search engines, **the better the quality** of the backlink.

Your SEO ranking will also improve.

## 12. SUBMIT YOUR SITEMAP TO GOOGLE SEARCH CONSOLE

Your sitemap is an overall directory of a site's readable content, also known as an index. Submitting this to Google circumvents waiting for search engines to organically find your site and crawl it for content, and provides their systems with a readable index of every page on your site, like a roadmap. According to Google, their systems will not check a sitemap every time your site is crawled; a sitemap is checked only the first time they notice it, so submitting it to Google Search Console (GSC) alerts Google to changes on your site. Making small changes, like updating filenames or adjusting fonts, does not require you to resubmit your sitemap.

Your Google Search Console will offer a performance report which assesses how well your site tracks over time. Useful metrics include queries made on smartphones, search traffic over time, where your traffic originates, and what queries are used to find your site. Similarly, the Index Coverage report details the pages on your site that have been indexed by Google. You should be able to identify a gradual increase in the count of valid indexed pages over time. You can also see how much of your site is indexed by searching Google for "site: www.mywebsitedomain.com." On your GSC dashboard,

| ☑ Error | ☐ Valid |
|---|---|
| **2** | **20** |
| 3 issues ⑦ | ⑦ |

☐ Impressions

Pages

### Details

| Status | Type | Validation ↓ | Trend | Pages |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Error | Text too small to read | ❗ Not Started | | 2 |
| Error | Clickable elements too close together | ❗ Not Started | | 2 |
| Error | Content wider than screen | ❗ Not Started | | 2 |

Rows per page: 10 ▾    1-3 of 3    < >

you'll be able to see the status of each page and any errors preventing it from being indexed. Google's support center outlines troubleshooting tips you can take in the event that you notice errors, but you can also use the Inspect URL tool to see errors on unique pages.

You might also take a look at the Mobile Usability report. Internet users access the web from a variety of devices. Ideally, your website should be responsive enough to work well on each and every device that may be used to view it. This report will overview any usability problems on mobile devices. Keep in mind that errors on this report don't mean your PhotoShelter site is not accessible on a mobile device, but that further improvements to the templates might be needed to render certain objects on a broad scale.

Google has a whole host of tools and options on the Google Search Console dashboard. They also have a support center, which is handy if you're not sure how to get started.

### 13. SET PERFORMANCE BENCHMARKS

A few times a year, Google performs a broad core update which can significantly affect site owners' SEO. These core updates often introduce wide-sweeping changes to improve how their systems assess content overall. On a daily
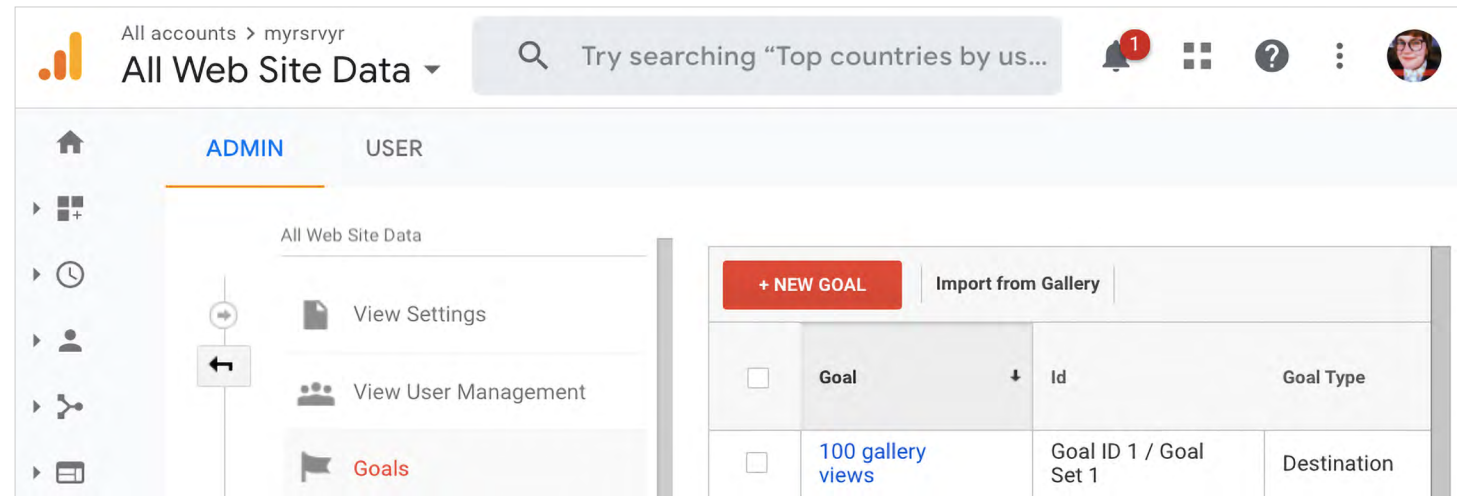


basis, Google also updates smaller portions of its systems to supplement the larger updates. While Google offers advice for webmasters on how to recover their site's SEO, your best bet is to continually track and measure how your site performs.
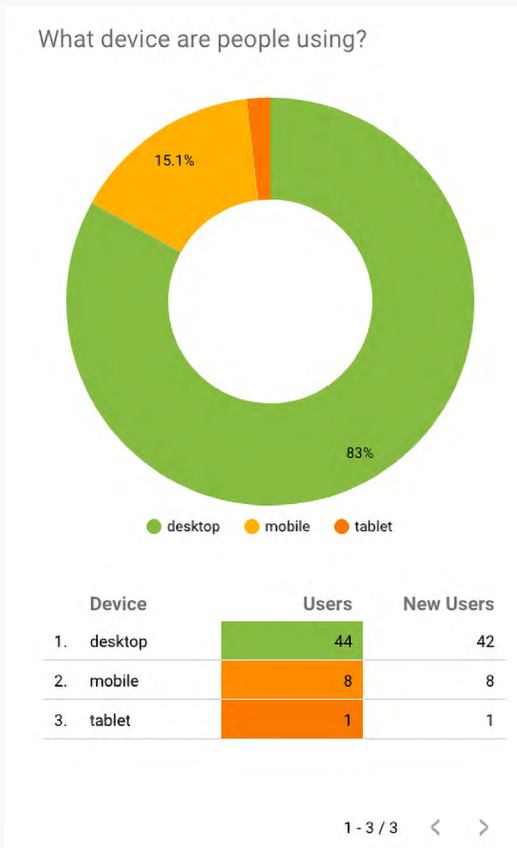
Without a clear picture of your site's performance, it's harder to optimize your site for search engines continually. Benchmarking helps you make informed decisions about your content, its impact and how to grow. Your target keyword list is a great place to start as it's the most flexible aspect of your SEO strategy and requires consistent pruning over time. As you monitor your site's impact, consider what future goals you'd like to set for yourself.

### 14. TRACK, ANALYZE & MEASURE WITH GOOGLE ANALYTICS

For a deeper look into your site engagement, use Google Analytics. Google recently increased the number of variables it considers when reporting your site's data back to you, providing a more robust look into your traffic and engagement. At its core, Google Analytics is a marketing tool with just as many ins-and-outs as Google Search Console.

Some reports offer insight into your audience engagement, detailing where your common visitors are geographically located, which websites send traffic your way (helpful for

## What are your top devices?

### What device are people using?



| Device | Users | New Users |
|--------|-------|-----------|
| 1. desktop | 44 | 42 |
| 2. mobile | 8 | 8 |
| 3. tablet | 1 | 1 |

1 - 3 / 3   &lt;   &gt;

backlinking!) and which pages on your site garner the most traffic. Other reports are higher-level and indicate your conversion rate, identify success and areas of improvement in marketing strategies, or flow visualisations overviewing a visitor's path through your website.

All of these reports are useful, but some of them might be more useful and easier to understand than others. The most basic reports are the Audience, Acquisition and Behavior reports, but you can also spend some time creating filters for your Channels, which allow you to compare traffic coming from search engines. The Referrals report will also detail which backlinks provide direct traffic to your site, allowing you to conduct a backlink analysis on your site after you've improved your backlinking strategy.

### 15. CITATIONS

After you've updated keywords, analyzed your strategy and networked with your community, you might still be wondering how to best optimize your site. While it's not conditionally a ranking factor assessed by Google, your citations can impact how people find you and hire you. Citations are any mentions of your business name, contact information and address found around the world, particularly online.

These listings should be exactly the same across any and all platforms you use. If you create a Google My Business page, the information listed there should match what's on your PhotoShelter site, your Facebook business page, or your Yelp Business account. If a site or profile you were featured on lists an outdated URL for your site, request that the link be updated. Consistency can help build trustworthiness in the eyes of Google and also keeps people in contact with you for potential future business.

### Google search:

**Damari McBride Photography**

Save

5.0 ★★★★★ 5 Google reviews

Hours: **Open 24 hours** ▾

**Phone:** (616) 432-7768

### Your website info:

email: damarimcbride@gmail.com

phone: (616) 432-7768

**PhotoShelter**

## 16. REWORK YOUR BRAND

There's no doubt that a photographer's happy place is behind the viewfinder. But one of the make-or-break aspects of your site is your brand. Face it: potential clients want to spend time on a site that looks good, has dynamic content and shares some of the aesthetic sensibilities they're looking for out of a photographer. Your brand and how you leverage content is one of the driving factors in how well your business performs.

Consistency in your brand work, especially on your website and throughout your citations, is one way to come full circle after honing in on your SEO strategy. If you're a PhotoShop or InDesign wizard, consider revamping your logo with a modern slant, paying close attention to how it functions on mobile devices. If you're expanding your business, consider creating a graphic or "sell sheet" for clients outlining your services. Have an affinity for video work? Make a quick commercial highlighting your business, style and past work. If this area isn't your strong suit, there are lots of free resources, like Canva and Fiverr, that help you streamline your branding work. And make sure to post any brand updates on your social channels: Facebook, LinkedIn and Instagram engagement can help spread your content to new audiences — and have a greater, lasting impact on your site traffic.

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THE PHOTOGRAPHER'S GUIDE TO SEO

PART III :

# Conclusion & SEO Resources

# CONCLUSION

SEO is a moving target. Whether you're looking to expand your client base, book more gigs or simply hoping to get your name out there, implementing these tips will help you optimize your site and provide you with a technical foundation to advance your future SEO efforts.

While this guide outlines some of today's best practices, the future of SEO might look vastly different even a year from now. Just as technologies are constantly adapting to advancements in artificial intelligence, natural language processing and machine learning, SEO is a continual learning process. While this might feel like an uphill battle, optimizing your site's content can fundamentally change the way users search and engage with your content in the digital sphere.

At PhotoShelter, our job is to adapt so that you can do what you already do best: create high-quality visual content. And lots of it. After all, being yourself has never been more rewarding than it is today.

© Beatrix Boros

# SEO Resources

If you still have questions about your SEO strategy or want to do your own deep-dive into best practices, our Technical Support team recommends the following resources:

- *Google's SEO Starter Guide*
- *Moz's Beginner's Guide to SEO*
- *Google's Webmaster Central blog* *publishes up-to-date changes from the search team*
- *Google Business*
- *Google Trends*
- *Majestic* and *Moz's Link Explorer* *provide backlink analysis services*
- *Google Search Console*
- *Google Analytics*
- *Google's Mobile-Friendly Test tool*
- *Bitly*
- *Hootsuite*
- *Linktree*

- *Wordtracker.com*
- *Woorank*
- *Canva*
- *Fiverr*
- *Google's Ranking Factors*
- *Google's Quality Guidelines* - *Google's Do's and Don'ts*
- *PhotoShelter blog's SEO posts*

In addition to these resources, our amazing Technical Support team can be reached via email at support@ photoshelter.com to answer questions.

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