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International SEO Best Practices

Learn how to maximize your multilingual SEO with these tips for experts.

Introduction

When your company is looking to reach new international customers, establishing a solid SEO strategy becomes a priority, fast.

But building SEO value for multilingual websites has different challenges than it does for your origin website—and requires its own set of best practices.

According to the experience and research of international SEO professionals, you can optimize your multilingual SEO potential with:

- ✓ Keyword optimization
- ✓ Connecting global properties
- ✓ Making easy technical tweaks to optimize discoverability

Keep reading to uncover actionable advice that can help your global SEO efforts.

Keyword Optimization

SEO keywords matter just as much for your localized international websites as they do for your origin site. Translated keywords help increase the likelihood of your translated sites showing up in local search results.



These best practices can help maximize the SEO visibility of your global sites:

1 FULL WEBSITE TRANSLATION

Presenting the entirety of your website in a market's preferred language is the most viable option to earn the business and trust of global customers. It's also the best way to feed search engines quality content with in-language SEO keywords and keyword clusters that will boost your ranking and relevancy in search results.

2 LOCALIZATION

Some core concepts that are vital to your brand identity or products might not translate directly, or might require a different approach to convey the idea to your customers. In this case, a simple translation of keywords might not be enough.

Localization—or nuanced translation that captures the culture and preferred phrases of a target market—can help make your content feel authentic to

customers. It will also benefit your in-market SEO by using keywords that actually match what locals are searching for in their preferred search engines.

3 TRANSLATION MEMORY

By using a *translation memory* database, you can avoid diluting the potency of your keywords with unnecessary synonyms or inconsistent word choices. Translation memory allows you to save time and effort, as well as maintain consistency, by identifying and re-using content for words and phrases that have already been translated. A bonus benefit: You can re-use those translations for omnichannel marketing, such as social media posts, and boost traffic through social sharing and relevant backlinks.

Connecting Your Global Properties

Connecting your multilingual websites across markets will give customers a seamless, trust-building global experience. More importantly for your SEO, this practice helps your translated websites increase in page rank and relevance in global search engines.

Make sure you follow these well-established strategies:

1 INTERCONNECTED GLOBAL WEBSITES

Connect your multilingual websites by cross-linking them to each other. Search engines value these links because they are relevant and related to each other. Your customers value these links as well, because it allows them to navigate to different translated versions if they choose.

2 LANGUAGE DETECTION TECHNOLOGY

In many instances, your global customers may visit your origin website, and need to immediately find a localized version of the site in their language. If they don't find that site right away, they're likely to abandon the experience—often never to return.

This can be prevented with smart language-detection technology that algorithmically determines what language a user prefers, and prompts them to visit the proper localized website.

3 GLOBAL SITEMAPS

Through implementation of *hreflang* tagging, your localized website's URLs can be organized and automatically associated with a URL from your origin website. This provides a signal to Google that a translated—and likely better—user experience exists for customers who speak a certain language, live in a particular location, or both.

Working 'Under the Hood'

Beyond optimizing your SEO keyword strategy and establishing connections across your global properties, there are some technical tweaks you can make to help search engines find your translated websites.

1 SUBMIT LOCALIZED SITES TO SEARCH ENGINES

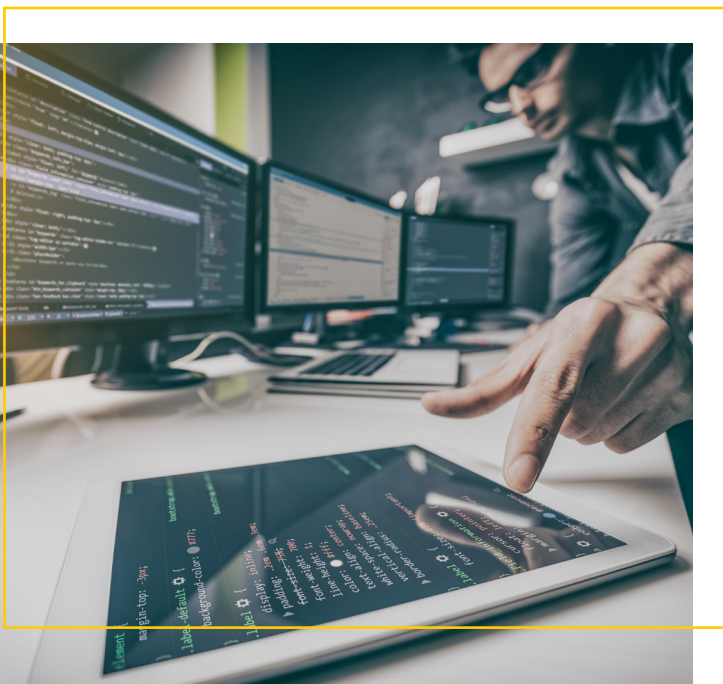
Use various webmaster tools to submit your localized sites to Google, Bing and other search engines to ensure they get crawled and indexed. Otherwise, it could take a while before your global sites show up in organic search results. In addition to the most common global search engines, make sure to determine the search engines your global customers use and submit your sites to them, too.

2 KEEP IT CRAWLABLE

Make sure your website is accessible to search engines by maximizing website crawlability. Check your site's *robots.txt* file to make sure it's not blocking content from being indexed or followed, or disallowing pages, sections or even all website pages. Also limit use of temporary redirects, and avoid redirect loops.

3 METADATA/STRUCTURED DATA

Your multilingual websites should contain SEO-rich metadata—like titles, descriptions and local schema metadata—that search engines can use to determine website quality, content relevance and page rank.



Localize this keyword-rich content to help your site rank highly in local search engines.

INTERNATIONAL TARGETING SETTINGS

Properly using Google's international targeting settings can help ensure your websites are seen by the right customers. You can select a country-wide target for your website, or ensure your *hreflang* tags are correct.



Google Search Console

Pay attention to diagnostics in your Google Search Console, such as crawl errors, international targeting errors and security issues. If an error has been detected, troubleshoot it and correct it immediately. If Google is seeing problems with your website, customers might not be able to find your site at all. You might be losing precious SEO benefits.

Conclusion

Implementing these international SEO best practices on your multilingual websites can help improve your visibility in local search results and increase organic traffic.

One important thing to note, however, is that it requires a balance of marketing, technical and cultural know-how—on top of great translation skills—to correctly pull these off. Even large global brands can overlook these key factors and waste their SEO potential.

Great website localization providers should be able to:

- ✓ Optimize your site's translation for SEO value
- ✓ Deploy language-detection technology solutions
- ✓ Set up global sitemaps with *hreflang* tags
- ✓ Translate and optimize metadata
- ✓ Provide insight on your sitemap, *robots.txt*, redirects and other under-the-hood components that affect your SEO

Ask your existing website translation provider how it can help you with your multilingual SEO— or look for one that specializes in these optimizations.

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