



The Content Man

The information you need to optimize your web content.

The Elements of Content Optimization

By The Content Man

Content Optimization is one of those terms that gets thrown around a lot, and thus has many meanings. Here's what this website means by the term: Content Optimization (CO) is the art and science of creating the optimum content for the goals you have set.

That last part is especially important: *for the goals you have set*. You can't optimize for objectives that haven't been stated. Websites can have very different objectives. Do you primarily want to make direct sales? Support sales teams by providing stature and brand? Build traffic and eyeballs? Generate leads for sales people, inside or outside?

With objectives in hand, here are the elements I have found are most important for Content Optimization.

Writing. This is first on the list because on your website, the writing is your sales pitch. It is your best sales person, talking to your most important clients. You wouldn't send just anyone to make the pitch, would you? If the writing on your site isn't confident, informative, helpful, expert and persuasive, fix it before you go any further.

Headlines and organization. This is related to writing, but I put it in a separate category because of the way people look at web pages. They don't read, at least not right away. They scan, look around, take in the page. Your headlines should use keywords while also helping to tell your story, and the organization of the content should filter the information so users can look around, see what's available, and easily go where they want to go.

Usability. This brings us to navigation. It goes without saying that you want easy navigation. But you also want *productive* navigation. Visitors need to find what they're looking for and feel in control. This will create a rich experience that brings them back.

Depth of content. Don't be afraid to go deep, as long as you break up your information into easy-to-read chunks. If you've addressed the previous elements, then the more content you add within that framework, the better.

Variety of content. Finally, step back and remember not to be one dimensional. Some people will be attracted to a flash demo or video. Others may want to read a white paper. Offer both--and everything in-between. Again, part of the rich experience you want to create.

What about Search Engine Optimization? In my view, SEO complements CO in a minor way. SEO is about search engines, not about actual content. If visitors find their keywords used eight times on your page, they'll at least know your site is discussing the right subject. Beyond that, however, the other factors have a much bigger impact on how well your content performs.