



CHILD CARE

State Capacity Building Center

Using Data to Inform Your Website

National Webinar

July 11, 2019

Introductions

- ◆ Child Care State Capacity Building Center
 - Kristie Lewis, Early Education Systems Consultant
- ◆ ICF Next
 - Darren Goldberg, Digital Analytics Strategist
 - Josh DeLung, Digital Strategist



Poll 1.

What is your position or role?





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Increasing Search Engine Optimization

Overview

Today, you will learn about

- ◆ what search engine optimization (SEO) is and why it is important,
- ◆ what parts make up the SEO process,
- ◆ why metadata are critical, and
- ◆ what little things you must do to ensure SEO success for your site.

What Is SEO, and Why Should We Do It?

- ◆ Search engine optimization increases the likelihood that people will find content through search engines.
- ◆ For most websites, the majority of visits occur through search engines.
- ◆ SEO is almost always the best way to increase web traffic.
 - Relevant
 - Engaged

What Makes Up SEO?

- ◆ **Technical SEO:** changes you make to your website (mostly behind the scenes)
 - Metadata that speak to robots and maximize algorithms
- ◆ **Content SEO:** link building from other sites, mainly from social media and content marketing
 - Useful, usable, relevant content is the most important element

What Are Metadata?

- ◆ Metadata are what appear on search engine results pages (SERP) once a user performs a search query.
- ◆ Metadata generally include the following:
 - Page title
 - Meta description
 - Alternative text
- ◆ (They're mostly stuff for robots to read.)

What Is the Process?

It all starts with an SEO audit.



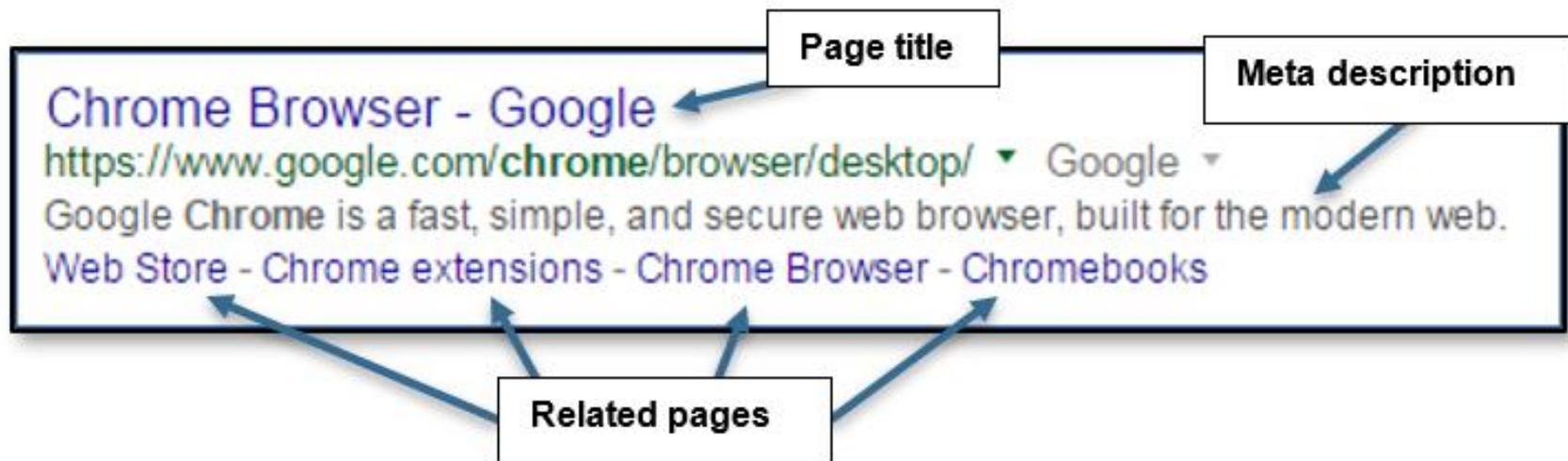
SEO Audit

- ◆ Run a crawl of the site to inventory all uniform resource locators (URLs) and their metadata.
- ◆ Sort the URLs by response codes to identify broken links or other errors.
- ◆ Define the scope of your audit using web analytics data.
- ◆ Look for pages within scope that are
 - missing metadata or
 - have inefficient, duplicated, or irrelevant metadata.

Fix and Write

- ◆ Remove or redirect broken links and errors.
- ◆ Write titles, links, and headings that are accurate and descriptive.
- ◆ Write clear, concise descriptions that summarize the page's content.
- ◆ Always write for people, not search engines. Keyword-stuffing to “game the system” with buzzword-laden metadata can harm a site's performance in a search.
- ◆ Use brief, clear URLs.

How the Elements Look on SERPs



Source: Google. (n.d.). Single result on a SERP displaying title, URL, description, and related links [Search engine results]. Google Search. Retrieved from <https://www.google.com/>. Google and the Google logo are registered trademarks of Google LLC, used with permission.

Page Titles

- ◆ Keep titles not only under 55 characters but also under 5 words.
- ◆ Place keywords toward the beginning of the title.
- ◆ Don't simplify the title so much that it creates confusion with other content on the site.

Example

- ◆ **Old title:** Learn more about child care by using this child care search tool, which provides you with child care options and information on quality.
- ◆ **Revised title:** Search for Child Care in [State Name]

Meta Description Guidelines

- ◆ Write in plain language—as always, write for people who are using the website for their specific purpose.
- ◆ Build on the title, making sure both make sense together.
- ◆ Keep the character count under 155 characters (including spaces).
- ◆ Try to place the primary word or phrase toward the beginning of the description.

Meta Descriptions

Meta descriptions are not page content. They should describe the page's content, not attempt to deliver it.

Example

- ◆ **Old meta description:** The Child Care and Development Fund (CCDF) reauthorization includes requirements for health and safety training. This resource provides information on health and safety professional training for out-of-school time providers, as required by state, plus access to research-based online training modules. Trainings are free; it costs \$5 for a professional development certification of completion. This site offers modules on other topics too, such as positive guidance and preparing to teach STEM (science, technology, engineering, and math).
- ◆ **Revised meta description:** Information on health and safety training for out-of-school child care providers.

Other SEO “Fixes”

SEO Process

Rationale

- ◆ Submit a sitemap for the website to Google Search Console and Bing Webmaster Tools.

- ◆ A sitemap is a list of all pages on a website. It helps search engines quickly crawl and index the site.

- ◆ Ensure that a robots.txt file has been submitted to Google Search Console and Bing Webmaster Tools.

- ◆ Robots.txt files restrict search engines from showing particular pages on the site in search results.

- ◆ Check the speed of page loads for the website.

- ◆ Google uses speed as one of its ranking factors, so making sure that the site loads in a reasonable amount of time is important.

URL Structure

- ◆ Refers to the way URL addresses for your web pages are formatted
- ◆ Should use whole words and avoid strings of numbers, symbols, or parameters

Example

- ◆ **Old:** <http://example.com/products%20%26%services/index.jsp?category=Inl&id=0315>
- ◆ **Revised:** <https://www.example.com/products/lawn-mowers>

Mobile Optimization

- ◆ Since 2015, Google gives preference to mobile-friendly websites by displaying them first.
- ◆ Common errors include the following:
 - Touch elements overlap.
 - Content is not sized for mobile screens.
 - Text is too small.

Measure (and maintain!)

- ◆ Benchmark search referral traffic.
- ◆ Capture URLs with technical SEO improvements.
- ◆ Measure increase in organic search referrals after you've made improvements.
 - Measurements should occur 3–6 months after changes take place.
 - Speed depends, to some degree, on how competitive the subject matter is.
 - Results are not always linear.



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Early Childhood Quality Assurance



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Web Traffic and Engagement

Analytics Today

- ◆ Data are more important than ever for making smart program decisions and recommendations.
- ◆ There are so many data points from multiple data sources.
- ◆ Lack of communication between key stakeholders and data analysts leads to misrepresentation of goals and key performance indicators.
- ◆ It is important to have upfront involvement from analytics to help determine strategic measures of success.



The Complete Digital Story

- ◆ Web analytics involves measuring, collecting, analyzing, and reporting web data to understand and optimize web usage.
- ◆ In a digital space, it's not just the measurement of your web presence but the reach of your tactics that drives traffic to your site.



Common Use of Analytics

You can make smart business decisions by leveraging data to do the following:

- ◆ Identify successes and failures
- ◆ Inform design and development concepts
- ◆ Test new ideas and optimize pages and/or content on your website.
- ◆ Spend resources smartly and appropriately



What Can Analytics Answer?

By providing strategic insights and recommendations, analytics can help you answer the following questions:

- ◆ Where are there opportunities to optimize user experience?
- ◆ Where are there opportunities to generate better outcomes that align with our goals?
- ◆ Did our work-to-date have the desired effects?



Digital Analytics Foundations

- ◆ **Configuration** ensures that analytics tools (for example, Google Analytics) are correctly set up and are properly capturing the right data at the right time.
- ◆ **Measuring and monitoring** establish baselines for improvement efforts before continuously measuring what users are doing in relation to established baselines and goals.
- ◆ **Analyzing and action planning** allow regular delivery of data to stakeholders in an understandable, contextualized way and help these data inform actionable recommendations for improvements.



Who's Ready for a Story?



Have You Seen This Before?



Let's Rewrite the Story Like This ...



You should automate reporting to gain 24-7 access to data that allows you to monitor those metrics that align to goals. Once automated, you can focus your analytics on telling the story behind the number versus just sending a number without context.

What Happens Next?



Ideal Analytics Approach

The following steps outline how to start measuring digital analytics for digital properties (for example, consumer education websites, mobile apps, and so on):

1. Define what will be measured (for example, downloads, page views).
2. Choose, install, and configure analytics software (for example, Google Analytics), and make sure downloads are set up as Event Tracking in Google Analytics.
3. Determine a measurement plan that aligns with stakeholders' needs. (For example, don't just track downloads; also look at what pages people use to access resources.)
4. Allow time for data collection to occur; typically, one month's worth of data is a good starting point for initial analysis.



What Should We Look At?



Overall Traffic and by Key Pages



Key Traffic Sources

SOCIAL MEDIA



EMAIL



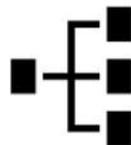
ORGANIC TRAFFIC



SEARCH TERMS



Goals and Events



Identifying User Pathways



What Is Important to Look At?

Analyzing and contextualizing data based on defined goals is important. Some common data points to begin looking at include the following:

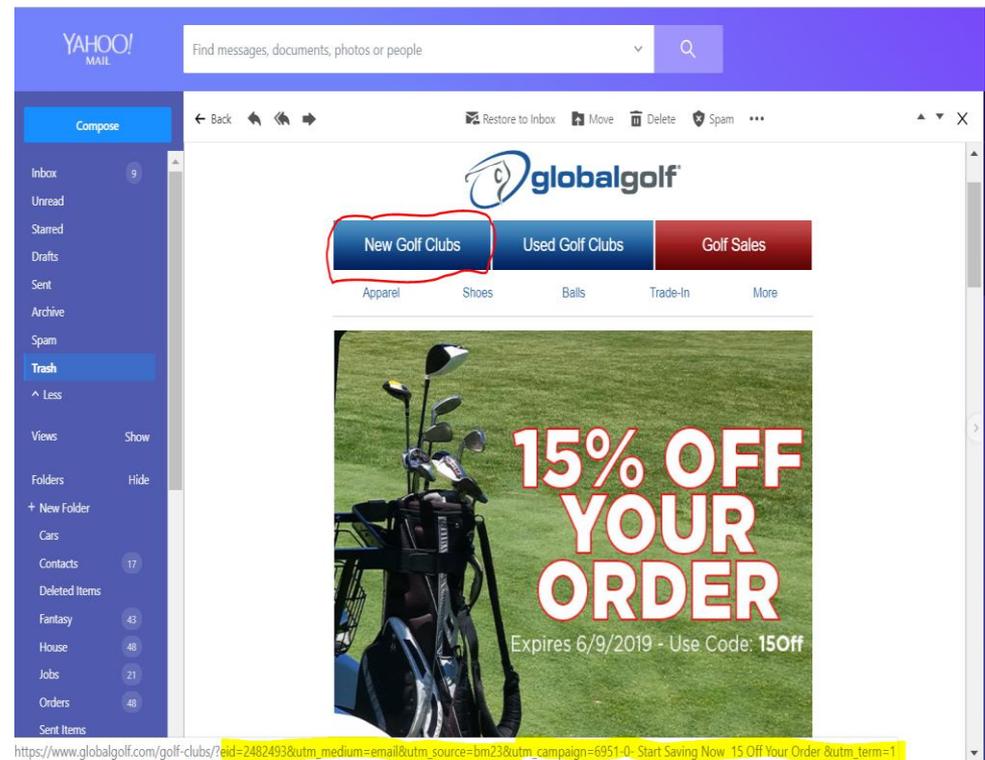
- ◆ **Traffic sources:** How are users coming to the consumer education website—through social media, direct search (through bookmarking the consumer education website, for instance), email campaign, or another site or search engine?
- ◆ **Traffic (overall and by page):** How many visitors come to the website overall? Also look at specific web pages to understand what content people are visiting more or less frequently.

What Is Important to Look At?

- ◆ **Search engine terms:** What words or phrases are driving users to the consumer education website when they perform a search (for example, “quality child care”)? This information can be found by integrating [Google Search Console](#) with your analytics account.
- ◆ **Goals and events triggered:** What do users interact with on the consumer education website? For example, completing a request for ordering a toolkit is an example of a goal. Downloading a PDF or clicking on a link to share information from the consumer education website on the user’s own social media page are examples of event tracking.
- ◆ **User paths:** What pages did users visit while on the consumer education website?

How Do We Measure Outreach Tactics?

- ◆ You should uniquely track all outreach that points traffic back to your site.
- ◆ Within Google Analytics, you can do this by using Urchin Tracking Module parameters. (UTMs)
- ◆ By uniquely tracking outreach, you can segment users and better understand their behavior (what content do certain channels interact with, and what tactics drove people there?).
- ◆ The important thing is to develop and consistently use a process to track **any** of your outreach.



What Tools Are Available for Free?

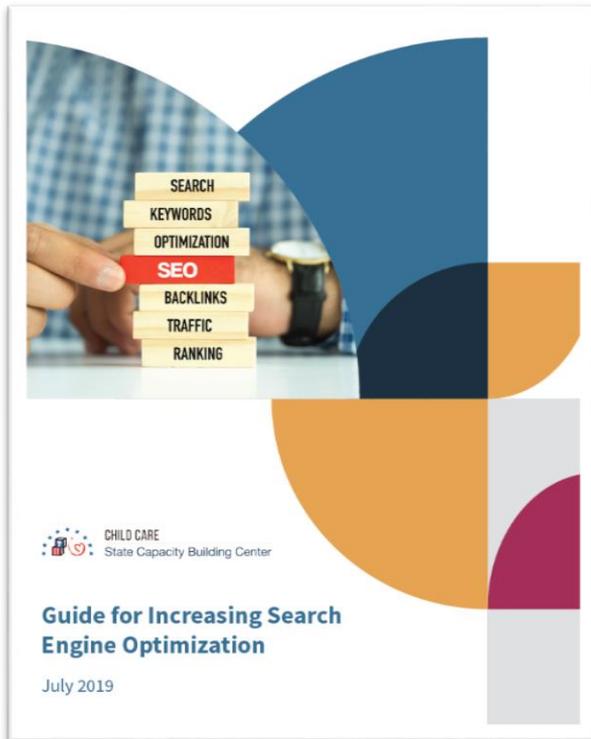
- ◆ **Google Analytics** tracks what users are doing on a website and how they got there by installing a snippet of tracking code on the site.
- ◆ **Google Search Console** offers tools and reports to help measure a site's traffic and performance and helps fix issues related to search rankings. This tool offers a way to understand organic search terms and queries that drive traffic to web properties.
- ◆ **Google Tag Manager** delivers simple, reliable, easily integrated tag management—without requiring you to edit code.
- ◆ **Google Data Studio** allows visualization of web analytics through custom reporting dashboards. This tool can also pull in data from other sources in addition to Google Analytics.
- ◆ **Google Optimize** runs tests on your website's content to learn what works best for your visitors, including A/B, multivariate, and redirect tests.

Analytics: Five Things to Remember

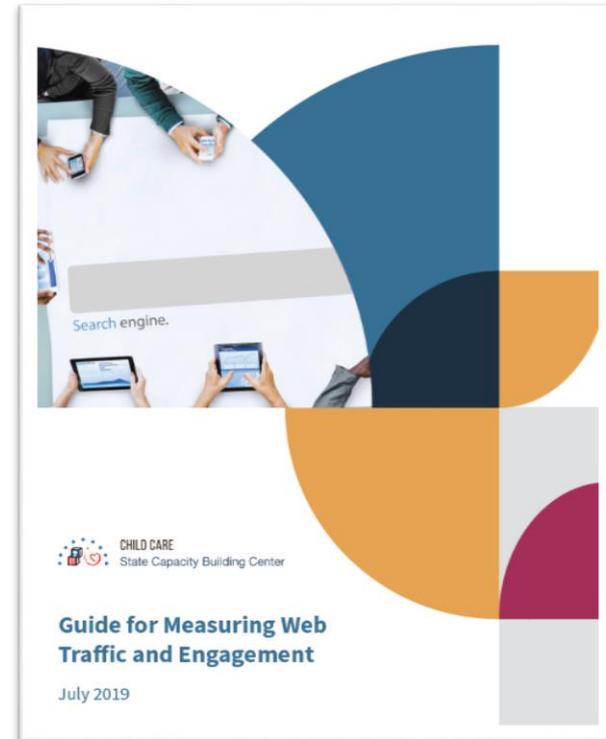
1. While the destination is important, don't lose sight of how you get there.
2. Ask yourself, "Now what?" If *you* don't, *we* will ... 😊
3. If you don't know where to start when it comes to defining success, ask yourself what you want to know, and go from there. Visualize a funnel; start small and work up to larger ideas.
4. Don't say, "Just track everything! We'll get back to it later." Guess what? You probably won't.
5. Analytics is confusing—that's why we exist! Always ask questions; the worst question you have is the one you don't ask.



Supporting Resources



Child Care State Capacity Building Center, Office of Child Care, Administration for Children and Families, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. (2019). Guide for Increasing Search Engine Optimization, Consumer education webinar series [Web page]. Retrieved from <https://childcareta.acf.hhs.gov/consumer-education-webinar-series>



Child Care State Capacity Building Center, Office of Child Care, Administration for Children and Families, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. (2019). Guide for Measuring Web Traffic and Engagement, Consumer education webinar series [Web page]. Retrieved from <https://childcareta.acf.hhs.gov/consumer-education-webinar-series>

“Ask Me Anything” Webinar

July 25, 2019, 2:00–2:30 p.m. (ET)



- ◆ This 30-minute follow-up webinar will answer questions raised today.
- ◆ Send additional questions to CapacityBuildingCenter@icfi.com.
- ◆ Note: every individual question may not be answered during the webinar.

Poll 2.

What other webinar topics interest you?



Next Hot Topic Webinar

Top 10 Actions to Improve Your Website Content and Design

August 8, 2019, 2:00–3:00 p.m. (ET)

- ◆ **Description:** this webinar will highlight best practices and examples in which states and territories enhanced their consumer education websites
- ◆ **Intended audiences:** state and territory CCDF Administrators, child care resource and referral agency staff, Preschool Development Grant Birth to Five (PDG B -5) grantees, early childhood training and technical assistance providers, quality improvement specialists, state and territory information technology and website development staff
- ◆ **Registration link:**
https://ccssn.adobeconnect.com/consumer_ed_resources_webinar/event/registration.html

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