AUTHORITY
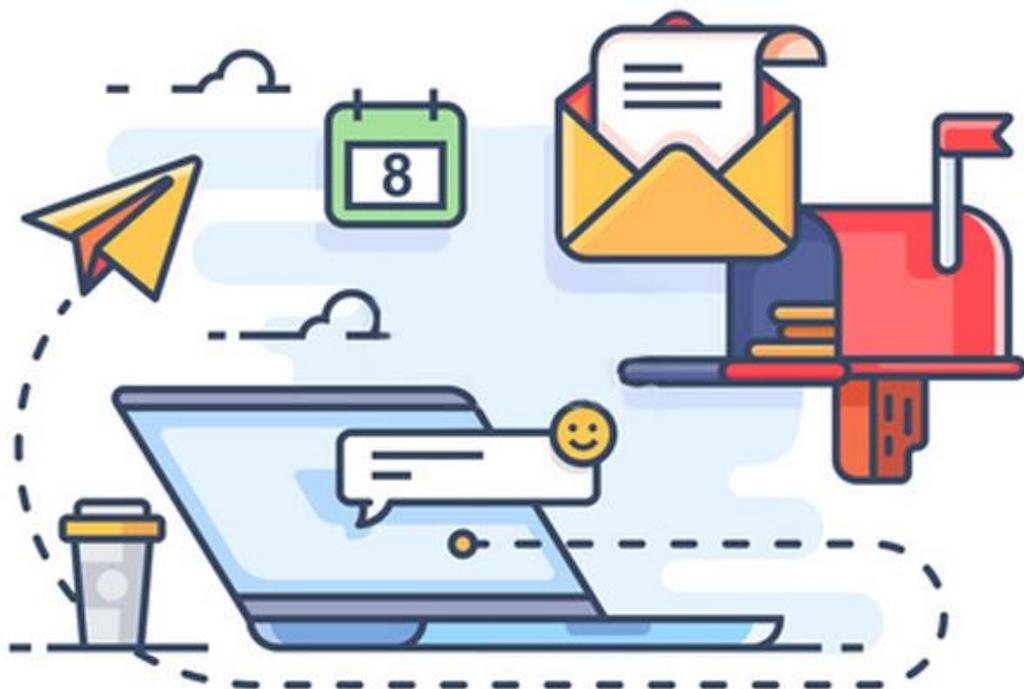# TRAFFIC

GUIDE 5:
GOOGLE IMAGE TRAFFIC

How to Drive More Traffic Using Google Image Search

When it comes to promoting a website and gaining more visitors and traffic, *a lot of marketers have tunnel vision*. That is to say that they seem fixated with just one or maybe a few different methods to promote their site and they lose site of any other options.

In particular, a lot of marketers and site owners will get absolutely fixated on SEO. Not only that, but they'll be fixated on a specific *type* of SEO and to the expense of all other options.

SEO is Search Engine Optimization. This is actually a broad term that refers to any activity that can help any aspect of your website to do well on any search engine. It is *not* just a limited set of tools for taking a blog post or web page to the top of Google – which is the way a lot of people treat it.

> *Tunnel vision is a dangerous affliction when it comes to internet marketing, because it means you might miss out on some of the more lucrative alternative strategies out there.*

Making money online is all about going where the fish are jumping but no one is casting their nets. And if you follow the same tired advice as everyone else, then you're going to miss out.

So let's take a look at how you can break out of that niche and get some traffic with a *different* form of SEO: Google Image Optimization.

What is Google Optimization And Why Should I Care?

As you might hopefully have guessed already, Google Image Optimization means optimization for your images. Your aim here is to appear in Google Image searches, so that people see your images and hopefully click through to go to your website.

Now there *was* a time when this was common practice among site owners and SEOs and considered one of the primary and recommended ways to get traffic.

Today though, it is often overlooked. There are a few reasons for this but one of the most concerning is that clicking on a Google image no longer takes you directly to the corresponding website.

Instead, it opens the image up in a small window and lets the user download it or move onto the next one. If they *do* click it, they can open the image *on its own* in a new browser window.

Either way, they've had no need to look at your site at this point!

Another issue with Google Image search is that Google doesn't show any preference to original images. That is to say that someone can just steal your image and then *supplant you* at the top of the image search.

It's all starting to sound a little fruitless then…

But Wait! Google Image Search Is Worth Your Time… *I Promise*

But before you shake your head and move on, consider a few different factors first.

- Firstly: there is a lot of merit in someone just *seeing* your image. This can help with brand awareness and especially if it is an image of a product that someone might want.
- People might still click through to your site – especially if the think that the image is great and it might be indicative of a good website, or if they want to learn more *about* the image
- Having your image embedded in other sites seems to be good for your SEO
- Google might one day change their policies, in which case being number one could earn you tons of traffic overnight!

In other words then, the benefits might not be quite as clear and obvious as they are for 'traditional' SEO, but that's not to say they don't exist!

And with that, you might now be wondering how you can go about optimizing…

Optimization Factors for Images

As with regular old SEO, no one knows the precise magic formula that Google uses in order to choose which images it shows. But that's not going to stop us! There is an awful lot we *do* know after all and even more that we can infer.

These are some of the factors that we know are important:

Text and SEO Factors

Surrounding Text: This is probably the most important aspect of Google Image optimization: the text that surrounds the image.

So, if the image is hosted on a page that is all about dog grooming and that uses optimization for that key phrase, then chances are that searching 'dog grooming' might bring up that image.

All the usual rules apply here then. You need to do your keyword research first of all to make sure that people are actually searching for the term and then you need to do a little more research of your own in order to see what the competition is like.

The ideal scenario is to find a subject that has a lot of searches, but not much in terms of good images.

Then you need to write a post around that subject matter and you need to subtly include the keyword where possible: *without* going overboard and 'stuffing' to the point that your content becomes unreadable.

Remember to also use LSI (Latent Semantic Indexing). Make sure that you include synonymous and write 'around' the subject while considering natural permutations of your chosen words. There are tomes and tomes on this subject, so I won't bore you any further here. Do the research.

As well as the content itself, you also need to think about the page URL, as well as the page title and any headers. Consider for a moment how this can impact certain types of image: image galleries for example don't tend to do all that well because they don't have much text surrounding them.

Alt Tag: The alt tag is the 'alternative' text. That means it's the text that shows when the image doesn't load and acts as a place holder. This is important because its job in that scenario is to inform the viewer what should have been there.

Therefore, it *should* be a relatively accurate description of the image, or text that tackles the same subject matter.

Either way, using the right alt-tag can help you to get more views for your site but only to a small degree. It's good practice to always fill this in and if you can use the keyword a little, that's extra credit!

The File Name: One of the most important elements of all is the file name – and there is literally nothing stopping you from using an exact keyword here. That's especially useful if it is reflected in the URL of the web page and if it is used subtly in the text. All the signs are starting to add up!

The Ranking of the URL: Consider the success of your site as it stands and any other factors like domain age and authority. If you have a site that is performing very well and one that isn't getting much love, then the image will of course perform best on the more popular and authoritative site.

Image Factors

As well as regular SEO strategies impacting on your image, you also need to think about the image itself.

Dimensions

If you browse through Google Images right now on any given term, you'll likely notice that there aren't many unusual dimensions among the results. Google and the rest of the web generally favour 16x9, but 4x3 square images also do well and you can sometimes get away with portrait photos.

Don't let this limit you though. If you have a stylistic idea for an image and you want a thin banner along the top for instance, then embrace the

creativity and take the hit. SEO should come second to creating a great experience for your visitors.

That said, if your image is currently a random dimension, it won't *hurt* to make it 16:9.

Originality

I mentioned earlier that Google doesn't necessarily prefer original images. That's good news for anyone who uses images from stock sites.

But the bad news is that Google doesn't tend to show the same images over and over again. So that means that a duplicate will only perform well at all if you can *beat* the original. Seeing as the original is already ranking, that can be an uphill struggle.

The best-case scenario then is that you *always* use original images. That's not going to be possible for everyone though and so the second best option is to choose unoriginal images but then make them as original as possible.

That might mean altering the dimensions (to one of those mentioned above if possible), it might mean zooming in or out, or it could mean using a filter in order to make them more artistic.

Image Quality

The first thing to recognize here is that Google doesn't really look at the images themselves… much.

When Google ranks a website, programs called 'bots' or 'spiders' will sift through the content and look at what's relevant. When Google ranks

images though, it traditionally has no way of knowing what's *in* the image.

This is starting to change now as Google begins to use more sophisticated technology such as OCR (optical character recognition) and computer vision.

Google is only just starting to be able to recognize text *inside* images this way, as well as looking at relevant objects and context within the picture. But this technology is in its infancy and won't have a big impact right now.

So, does the quality of the image matter of all?

Of course it does! Because as with all SEO, the aim here is not to impress Google but to impress the visitor. The visitor is ultimately the customer for both you *and* Google and Google wants to see images that perform well and get clicked on.

Not only that, but in order for your image optimization to be beneficial, you need your visitors to click on the image or at least look at it and remember your branding. At the very least, you need to ensure your image pops and stands out in a crowd of images.

To do that, you need high quality images. So how do you make sure your images are high quality?

The answer is to learn how to make good ones or commission someone that can. Learning some basic photography skills is something that will get you a very long way for instance and is well worth the time investment.

Good photography comes down partly to owning a good camera. At the same time though, you also need to consider the composition of the shot and take into account the foreground, middle ground and background elements.

You need to think about the lighting and you need to try and tell a story.

Don't just shoot your subject head on, but think about ways to add drama, movement or mystery to your shots. Post is also important – turn up the vibrance and add effects to make your images really stand out in a line up.

What to do With All This

While Image optimization is clearly very important, that doesn't mean you should invest *too* much time into it. It's still a relatively minor factor in the grand scheme of things, it's just something to consider for that little extra boost.

> With that in mind, a great place to start would be by auditing your existing images.

Have a look through them and look for ways to make them original, swap out the bad ones for more dramatic and exciting options and fix the dimensions where possible.

You might also consider adding a watermark, which can be great for your brand visibility. From then on, set yourself some editorial guidelines and share them with anyone who contributes to the site.

This means adding an alt tag and resizing etc. each time you upload.

It might take a minute or two longer to create any new post on your site, but the result will be that your images really pop and jump off the page.

And at the same time, it will benefit the look of your posts and the satisfaction of your audience too!