The *Tip* Jar

Best web practices to help you improve your online content

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Issue 8:
SEO

What is SEO?

"Search Engine Optimization is about helping search engines understand and present content." - Google's SEO starter guide.

A search engine, like Google or Bing, is what people use to find content on the internet. Most people don't type your website's address (url) into their browser (Chrome, Internet Explorer, Safari). They search topics and look at the results the search engine provides.

Website developers can include code to make it easier for search engines to find a website. As editors, you play a role in improving optimization too.

Content is still king

Search engines reward well written and organized webpages – write for your audience and the search engines will follow. In a nutshell, as Google's guidelines say, *"Put useful content on your page and keep it up to date."*

Page titles

- Create short, meaningful page titles.
- Use page headings that convey the subject of the page.
- Use the same words in the page title and page content that your visitors are likely to use. For example, family doctor, not primary health-care provider.

Key words

These are the main words that represent the topic on your page. Learn more about researching and choosing keywords.

Put keywords high on the page:
- o   in the page title if possible
- o   in the first or second line
- o   in headings on the page

Aim to use them about four times on the page, if it fits naturally in the flow of your content. **BUT**, do not try to stuff your page with keywords in an attempt to

make your page show up higher in search. Google will punish you in the rankings.

Links, headings & images (oh my!)

Once you've got good, relevant content on your page, then focus on these areas for increasing your SEO.

Links
- **Inbound links:** the more sites that link to your page, especially related sites and popular sites, the better. You can ask owners of reputable sites to link to your page.
- **Outbound links:** linking to reputable websites can help your ranking.
- **Internal links:** are links from other pages on the same website. They strengthen your page's relevance because they often reinforce your keywords.
- **Good link text:** the words you use for your link text really do matter. Banish "click here", "learn more", "more information" or "more" from your pages. Descriptive link text reinforces keywords and helps the search engine know what the content behind the link is about. (The two links in this document are examples of a descriptive link.)

Heading styles

Use the heading styles in the editing ribbon appropriately and put keywords in them, when applicable. Learn more about heading tags on our websites.

Images
- Use text rather than images to convey content. Google can understand some image and video, but not as well as text.
- Big image file sizes can make the page load slowly which can affect ranking.