

Shawn the SEO Geek's 20/180 Principle

(AKA: 8 Ways to improve your SEO without having to wait a million years for results.)

There is nothing... I repeat... NOTHING worse than investing THOUSANDS (if not more) of dollars into something then being told casually and calloused;

"Now We Wait"

It's like sinking \$200k into a brand new Maserati and being told "OK, the keys will be there in a year."

It's no secret that SEO is a LONG TERM strategy.

But a year?!?

After seeing this over and over again, I started to ask, Why?

Why should the SEO process take so long?

Years back, I was working for agencies and had to have *that* conversation with a bunch of clients.

(And of course, it never goes over well...)

So, I started looking for ways to get quick wins.

If I could show my clients that doing these *5 things* (arbitrary number) would get them results fast, they'd feel a lot better about the relationship and spending money with my agency.

Win/Win, right?

Well, yes and no.

I quickly learned the ugly underbelly of the agency world.

The purpose of an agency is to get clients on the hook for at least a year.

So, how do you make that happen? By creating busy work and attributing it to the fact that Google has 200+ algorithm signals and there's a lot of work to do.

What I was doing with my clients was going AGAINST this objective.

I created a system that my clients were implementing and getting some results that surprised even me in record time...

Rankings were increasing.

Traffic was increasing.

And most importantly, Revenue was increasing.

You'd think that'd be a great thing for an agency right?

Turns out, that's a big no.

I'll spare you the gory details, but it ultimately resulted in me branching out on my own.

When I turned this loose analysis I was doing into what's now called the 20/180 principle, people were hooked.

I essentially hacked the "time" aspect of SEO, and clients were seeing results within 30 days as opposed to the 6-9 months other agencies were promising.

I've used a loose variation of the 20/180 principle for about 125 clients now.

It wasn't always as defined as it is today, but the science of it remains the same.

The "Ah-Ha" moment that cemented this as a viable strategy

I started to recognize this concept when I had yet another client that was getting a little uneasy after a couple months of working together.

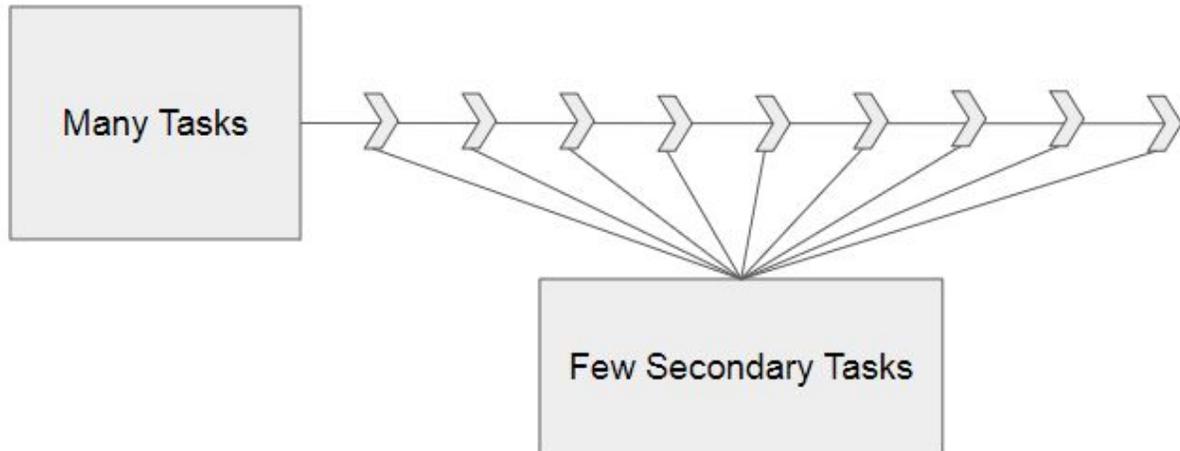
"Shawn, I see you're doing so much, but I don't see any results."

And I was thinking to myself... "I'm going to just do these two extra things, and see what it does." I owed it to her. I am committed to helping everyone succeed.

To my (and her) amazement, within 30 days, traffic was up 13% year over year when it had previously been declining. The only thing out of the norm/status quo were a couple tactics that I'll outline below in more detail

More on that later...

See, In a traditional SEO strategy, this is what the typical timeline looks like...



In the beginning, there's a barrage of tasks performed, of which, few are critical.

So why is it common to "front load" so many tasks, then trickle things like link building out over time? It stems from Google's claim that there are ~200 individual ranking signals at work at any given time.

In theory, if you rapidly perform many acts at once, you will see results fast, right?

But, in my experience, there are an initial 20 questions to be answered that get you from virtually invisible to relevant.

This is the difference between ranking past page 10/position 100 to page 2.

Not ignoring the importance of page one here: and that's where the remaining tactics come into the picture.

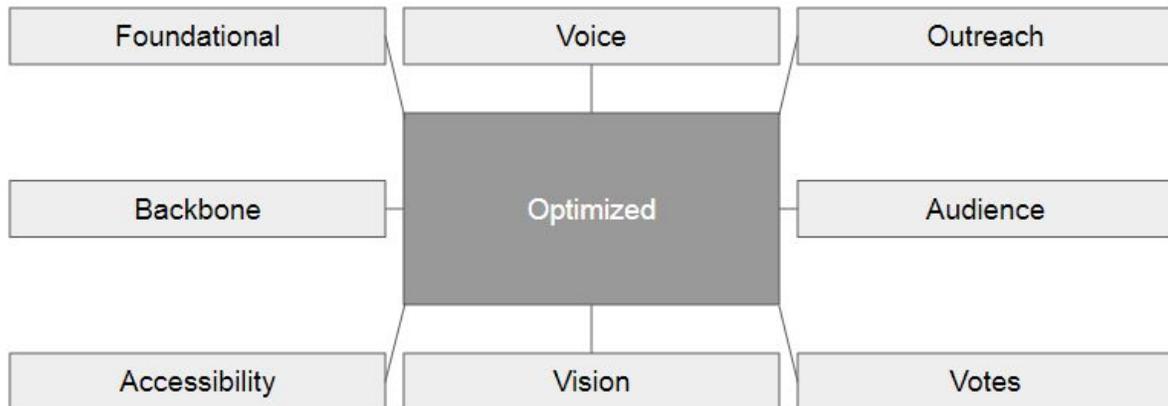
The purpose of this exercise is building the foundation.

Without answering these 20 Questions, the likelihood of any relevance, whatsoever, is slim.

The 20/180 Principle, Defined: Lenses

The 20 questions are divided into 8 Lenses.

Each lense is a separate “discipline” and contains several questions.



Each of the Disciplines I've found to be equally important.

A big mistake many in SEO make is thinking they can “tip the scales” in one discipline and the weight of their “score” in that region will make up for mediocrity in other areas.

Typically, the Outreach Lense tends to get the most attention in this regard.

“If we ‘build MORE links’, we will outrank our competitors.

At one time, that may have been a true statement, however, in modern SEO, the critical objective is to create an incredible user experience, first and foremost, then create a superb crawl experience for Google.

Often, these go hand-in-hand.

The 20 Questions

Knowing that the concept of 20/180 means there are 20 “first tasks” to tackle, that leads us to ask “What are the initial 20?”

Here are the initial 20, broken down by lense:

Vision

(Strategy)

- Does your keyword research include a variety of terms, long tail and short tail?
 - Long Tail = Terms containing 3 words or more (Higher Converting)
- Is your website Hierarchy broken down into easy flowing categories?

Foundational

(On-Page Optimization Tactics)

- Are Your Page Titles within Google’s Quality Guidelines?
 - Under 60 Characters?
 - Written in “Plain Language”?
- Are your Meta Descriptions within Google’s Quality Guidelines?
 - Under 156 Characters?
 - NON-Keyword Stuffed?
- Is there a targeted keyword starting within the first 10 characters?
- Is your Brand (or URL) in your Page Title?

Voice

(As in, Brand Voice: Content)

- Are you applying LSI (Latent Semantic Indexing) Principles?
 - Applies CONTEXT to your content
 - Assists in Voice Search Queries (Optimizes for THEME instead of KEYWORD)
- Does all of your content serve a purpose
 - Avoids “Content for the sake of content” to reach a word count quota
- Are you avoiding dense paragraphs?

Outreach

(Backlink Signals)

- Does your backlink profile exceed a 20/1 average link to domain ratio?
 - On average, more than 20 links from one website to yours
 - If it does, consider getting more referring domains with fewer links from each
- What is the Quality Score of your overall profile?
 - Regardless of link tool preference, is your score above a 35?
- What is the proportion of NoFollow/Follow
 - This is not as critical as you think. Having links from quality sites, even if “NoFollow” will still send quality ranking signals.

Backbone

(Technical)

- Is your XML Sitemap configured with URL, Last Modified, Priority? Is it submitted to Google’s Search Console?
- Are your URLs free of unnecessary redirects?
 - 302’s that should be 301, etc.
- Are rel=canonical tags implemented (and properly?)

Customer

(User Experience)

- Is your bounce rate between 30% - 40%
- Do your pages contain internal links that target critical phrases/categories?

Accessibility

(Mobile User Experience)

- What is your Google Mobile Friendliness Grade/Report?
- Are all “clickable” elements well spaced?

Votes

(Social Signals)

- Do your social media posts that have activity include a URL link to your site?
 - Remember, sharing your link isn’t enough... interaction is also measured

After these questions are answered, the foundation is in place.

Now, you may be wondering about the logistics of ranking on Page 1 as a next step?

Developing Your Ongoing Strategy

This comes in 2 simultaneous strategies:

1. Competitive Reverse Engineering
2. The Remaining 180

More Importantly, the timing is much more interesting here:

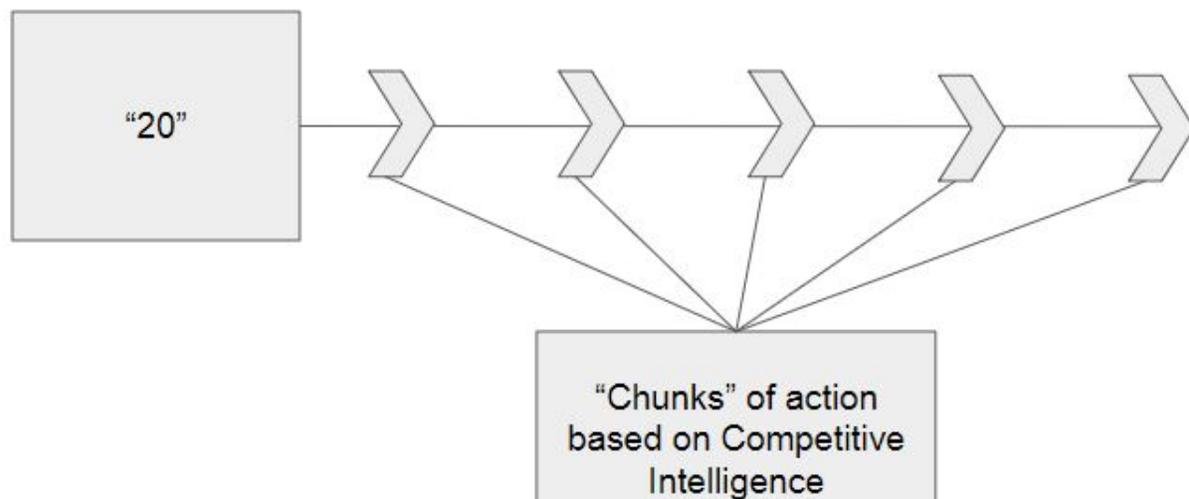
Traditionally, the SEO process is comparable to a “slow drip”.

But with the 20/180 principle, success is seen when executed in waves.

It's my belief that this is the result of Google's time delay function.

I sum this up as “Do something now, Google reflects it in a couple months”. (This of course excluding major technical errors).

So, the execution path looks more like this...



Breaking this down further:

Competitive Reverse Engineering

Equally effective to keeping an eye on these metrics for our own site, is to observe the tactics used by our competitors.

The reality is that Google's Algorithm is a series of equations and metrics.

By observing our metrics against where our competitors line up in each of these elements gives us an opportunity to play a digital game of chess, if you will.

For example, if we see that our competitor has a particularly weak mobile performance, but is of equal strength in every other area, improving our mobile performance will improve our likelihood of ranking well in Google.

The Remaining 180

These remaining points are where you differentiate.

This is the opportunity to gain an edge by introducing more advanced and conditional elements like:

- Structured Data
- HREF Lang
- Knowledge Graph
- Blog Strategy
- Google my Business Strategy (if local SEO is relevant to your business)
- etc.

The remaining 180 all also fall within the 8 Lenses.

These are the details within each of the individual questions.

Think of the 8 lenses as bricks and The Remaining 180 as the mortar. The 8 lenses are pretty sturdy, but the mortar holds it all together.

The External Factors

It's worth noting that the points mentioned in 20/180 are assuming "standard operation."

This means that there are not extraordinary situations at play like a penalty, website relaunch, major algorithm shift, or negative SEO attack.

These extreme situations require a different level of care outside of the 20/180 principle.

Case Studies

Medical Supply Company - Average Keyword Ranking went from Position 12 to 6 with two months.

Fast Fashion Company - Traffic Increase of 13% Year over Year (previously declining YOY) after implementation of LSI Content.

Online Printing Company - Traffic Increase of 62% and Revenue Increase of 44% Year over Year after implementing intelligent website hierarchy.

Publishing Startup - Traffic grows by ~20% monthly from the implementation of MOBILE FIRST LSI Content

Lighting Retailer - Conversion rate increased from ~3% to ~4.25% from content modifications and navigational/hierarchy changes.

What it all boils down to is the creation of a strategy that gives your customer an amazing experience and is easy for Google to get to/crawl through.

What's Next?

For the next week or so, I've opened up my calendar to chat with a few businesses.

This isn't a standard "Sales Pitch disguised as a Consultation" type of call.

We will discuss strategy, goals, and you'll leave with actionable tasks to get your SEO traffic to the next level.

Why am I doing this?

IF it looks like I can help your business, I may invite you to be a client. I don't ask more than half of the people I talk to, but the ones I do ask, I'm able to help immensely.

If you want to take a shot and grab a spot, you can apply here: shawnswaim.com/schedule

Or, you can go it alone.

Take guesses and potentially not make any headway in this.

Not because you CAN'T...

But because you'll have other stuff going on.

And you don't have the 8 years in SEO for ecommerce that I do.

So, ready to cut the line and get SEO results faster?

Grab a time here: shawnswaim.com/schedule