Four Google SERP features for ecommerce SEO

30-second summary:

- Holiday season shopping is on and your ecommerce store whether a local shop or an international ecommerce brand needs visibility for sales
- How do you jump right in front of your potential customers and drive sales in a highly competitive space?
- SEO pioneer, former Pepperjam founder, and serial entrepreneur, Kris Jones shares a practical ecommerce SEO guide

There is perhaps no type of business that is more primed for SEO than ecommerce companies. Think about it: where a local law firm can put up a billboard or buy ad space in a regional newspaper in addition to doing SEO, ecommerce businesses essentially have one resource available to them, the internet.

That’s where they do 100 percent of their business, and it’s where they’re going to reach the customers they want. So, ecommerce companies should spend a lot of time getting their SEO just right. One crucial way of doing that is to optimize your site to appear in Google’s various SERP features.

There are so many ways you can tell users about your business just from the SERP even before they get onto your website. And the information you present could mean all the difference between capturing your ideal traffic and losing it to competition.

Therefore, to market yourself in the best light to all potential customers searching for your products, you have to optimize your website specifically for the SERP features that drive conversions.

How do you do it? Here are four of the most vital Google SERP features for which you should be optimizing your ecommerce business' SEO.

1. Rich cards

Back in 2016, Google introduced a new mobile SERP feature called rich cards. By using structured data, SEOs could make a business's results "richer," that is, more visually appealing, clickable, and therefore more likely to generate an organic click.

If you search for a certain type of product, results marked up with the proper language tell Google to show the product along with an image that can help users know if they want to explore more. Users simply swipe to see more items.

Now, why am I recommending a SERP feature from 2016?

It's because in the first quarter of 2021, mobile traffic accounted for almost 55 percent of online traffic worldwide, and that number is only going to increase. Basically, mobile search results are even more relevant today than they were in 2016.

With that in mind, how can you optimize your ecommerce products for rich cards?

You need to use the JSON-LD method of marking up your products. You can then test your work with the various free rich results tools on offer from Google.

2. Google Images results

Somewhat related to rich cards is the need for ecommerce businesses to optimize their content for Google Images results. Relevant images will appear at the top of a SERP, before any organic results.

A good product description does indeed go a long way, but don’t forget to think simply, as well: if customers can see clear, high-quality images of your products, that will help your credibility along, and hence drive conversions.

How do optimize for Google Images results? Well, Google doesn’t read images like it reads text, so it’s all going to come down to how you prepare your images on the back end.

First of all, ensure your images are originally yours. You don’t stand much of a chance trying to rank for stock photos.

Next, give your photos descriptive file names that tie into the pages where they will be placed. In the case of ecommerce, since you’ll probably have a series of photos for each product, give the image files titles that reflect the product, with words separated by hyphens.

Here’s an example: unisex-sneakers-blue-brandname-yoursitename

And don’t forget to provide descriptive alt text to each image in case it can’t load and be seen.

Finally, be sure you’re not uploading huge image files that will weigh down a website. Compress them down as small as you can to give your site enough breathing room while still ensuring the images show what you need them to show. Check out this comprehensive guide on image optimization.

3. Rich snippets

Wait a minute, you might say, why are you talking about both rich cards and rich snippets?

With ecommerce products, rich cards will stop you at the images. You can choose to go a step further for appropriate products by optimizing for rich snippets.

Rich snippets add in extra details about your products. These

get placed inside your search results, under the meta title, and above the meta description.

To get rich snippets on your product results, you'll use structured data just like you did for rich cards. You can choose which information to enter based on what specifically can grab your potential customer's attention and satisfy their search query.

For ecommerce companies, it makes the most sense to optimize your rich-snippet products for prices, in-stock status, sales, different brands, customer reviews, and star ratings.

Think about each of these features. Doesn't it make sense that a customer searching for this type of product would want to see this information from your online store?

Rich snippets are one great way of reaching users with extra information without the need for the users actually to click on your result. You're taking the most concentrated bits of data about your product offerings and jumping right out onto the SERPs at the user.

Sure, you can choose not to do this for your products. But if your competitors are, who do you think stands the better chance of getting a click and making a sale?

Rich snippets are just good ecommerce SEO, plain and simple.

4. Sitelinks

Finally, you should attempt to optimize your site for SERP sitelinks.

I say "attempt" to optimize because this isn't a SERP feature you can just click on and off, like alt text or structured data.

So we're all on the same page here, sitelinks are the

clickable buttons below your result's metadata on a SERP. They typically offer opportunities for users to navigate directly to sections of your website.

In the case of ecommerce, the most logical sitelinks you would want to get listed in your result would be for your most popular product categories.

But again, I'm saying "would want" because sitelinks are chosen by Google's algorithm. That doesn't mean you can't influence which sitelinks Google places there. Which pages Google links in your results is based primarily on your site's navigation.

As SEOs, we always recommend having a direct and easy-to-navigate website structure. It helps the user experience, supports navigation, and prompts Google to crawl your pages.

Other things that help Google crawl your site include keyword-optimized content, smart internal linking, and simple, intuitive menus.

It is through these elements that you stand your best chance of defining what your SERP sitelinks will be. When you tell Google which pages are most important to you and your customers, the search engine will respond in kind by generating helpful sitelinks.

This is yet another example of having your SEO jump right to the SERP at users without them having to do anything.

And when you're in the competitive ecommerce space, that really matters.

Go forth and optimize

Businesses always have it tough when going up against the competition. Whether you're a local shop or an international ecommerce brand, there's always someone else trying to beat

you at your own game.

While SEO can never make anyone do anything, we put ourselves on the best possible footing when we take the above steps to optimize our websites for the SERP features.

If you're not doing these things already, you'll want to get started as soon as you can! And then sit back and watch what happens.

Kris Jones is the founder and former CEO of digital marketing and affiliate network Pepperjam, which he sold to eBay Enterprises in 2009. Most recently Kris founded SEO services and software company LSEO.com and has previously invested in numerous successful technology companies. Kris is an experienced public speaker and is the author of one of the best-selling SEO books of all time called, 'Search-Engine Optimization – Your Visual Blueprint to Effective Internet Marketing', which has sold nearly 100,000 copies.

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