

# *60 Minutes to an SEO-Friendly Business Website*

How to Perform Your Own  
Website Audit for Free



**NorthboundDigital**

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## Intro

Hi everyone,

I wrote this guide with the small business owner in mind. Most businesses don't have the time or the money to hire SEO help, even though their business website desperately needs some tender loving care. This guide provides a step-by-step tutorial on how to complete your own website audit, from indexation to URL structures to duplicate content issues, we cover everything you need to know about making your website SEO-friendly, then we tell you how to do it. All in less than an hour!

If you find this guide helpful, please share it with others who may find it valuable. Enjoy!

*Brian Klemm*



President

Northbound Digital – Chicago SEO and Inbound Marketing Company

[NorthboundDigital.com](http://NorthboundDigital.com)

# Preparation

[Screaming Frog SEO Spider](#) - Screaming Frog is free for you to crawl up to 500 pages at a time. If you have a bigger site than this, purchasing an annual fee is required. However, you can enter subdirectories separately as a way around this. For example, <http://www.northbounddigital.com/blog/> will provide me all the posts from my blog. You can continue doing this for all your subdirectories, so that you are still crawling your entire site - just in bits and pieces.

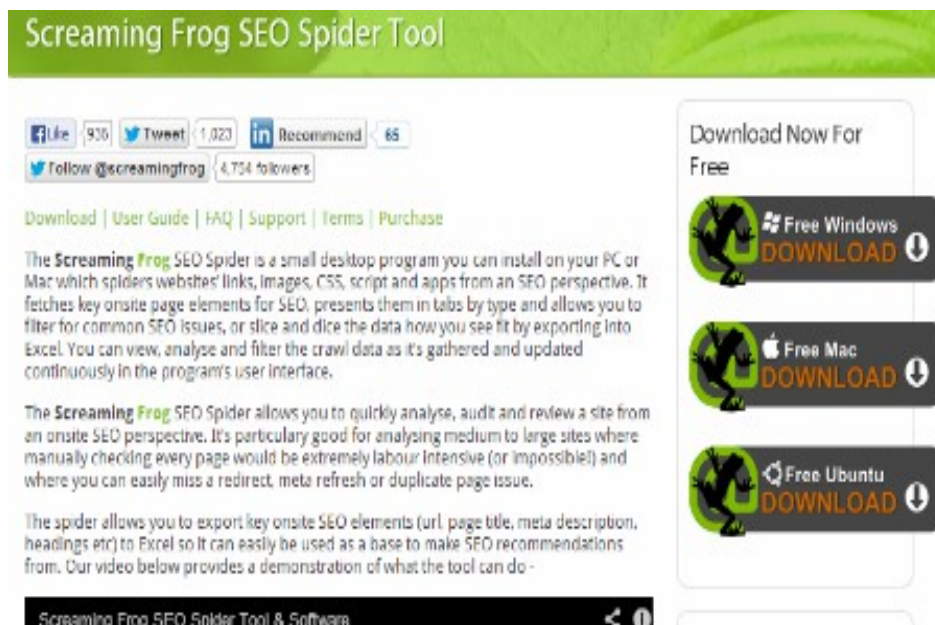
Sign up for [Google Webmaster Tools](#) and [Bing Webmaster Tools](#) if you have not already done so. Both provide important insights on the health of your website and ways to improve it.

[Google Analytics](#) (free) or some other analytics program - Extremely valuable to see where website traffic is coming from and how they arrived at your site. Sign up and install it if you aren't using it yet.

## Let's Get Started

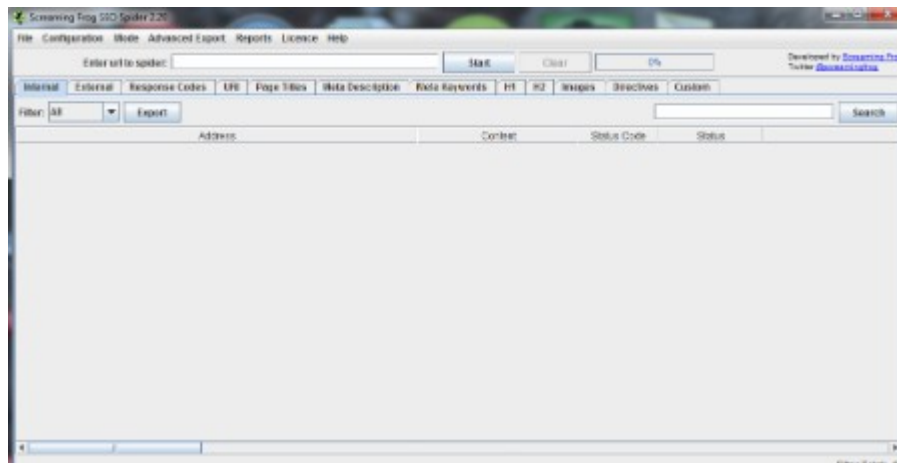
Many people believe off-site ranking factors like links and social signals account for 90% on the ranking algorithm, but you know what? According to Moz, 43.12% of a search engines algorithm is [on-page elements](#). This is great news for small business owners - we can easily turn our website from one that is being ignored by the search engines into one that is technically sound.

OK, first thing we want to do is download [Screaming Frog SEO Spider](#) and open it. We are going to be using it throughout this guide. Trust me, it's safe to download to your computer, if you get nervous about stuff like that :)

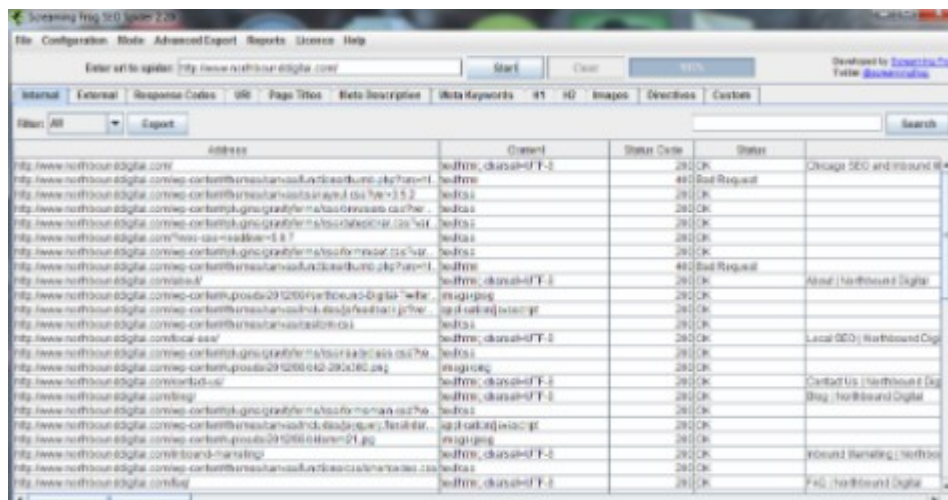


The screenshot shows the website for the Screaming Frog SEO Spider Tool. At the top, there is a green header with the text "Screaming Frog SEO Spider Tool". Below this, there are social media sharing options: Facebook (936 likes), Twitter (1,023 tweets), and LinkedIn (65 recommendations). There is also a "Follow @screamingfrog" button with 4,754 followers. Below the social media links, there are links for "Download", "User Guide", "FAQ", "Support", "Terms", and "Purchase". The main content area contains two paragraphs of text describing the tool. The first paragraph states that the tool is a small desktop program that crawls websites for links, images, CSS, script, and apps from an SEO perspective. The second paragraph explains that the tool allows users to quickly analyze, audit, and review a site from an onsite SEO perspective. On the right side of the page, there is a "Download Now For Free" section with three buttons: "Free Windows DOWNLOAD", "Free Mac DOWNLOAD", and "Free Ubuntu DOWNLOAD". At the bottom of the page, there is a black footer with the text "Screaming Frog SEO Spider Tool & Software" and a small icon.

The Screaming Frog website. Click download and open the program after it's finished downloading.



This is what the program will look like when you open it. Exciting, I know! Next, let's enter our website URL in the "Enter url to spider" field and click "Start".



This is the result of the Northbound Digital crawl. We will get into the important information we can extract from the crawl along the way.

## Site Accessibility

The first part of this guide is checking your website's accessibility. If users and the search engines can't find the site, it might as well not even exist, right?

### Robots Meta Tags

The robots meta tag is used to tell search engine crawlers if they are allowed to index a specific page and follow its links.

To look at your meta tags, go to your homepage and right click "View page source". In the <head>

section near the top, make sure there is no code with `<meta name="robots" content="noindex, nofollow" />`. This would mean the search engine crawlers don't index the page and don't follow the links on it. We want the search engine crawlers to be able to find all of our pages.

## Robots.txt

The robots.txt file of your website can restrict search engine crawlers from accessing sections of your website. The file is incredibly useful, but it can also potentially block the crawlers from visiting your site if not used correctly.

[Click here](#) to check the robots.txt file of your business website.

### Testresults for <http://www.northbounddigital.com>

robots.txt: <http://www.northbounddigital.com/robots.txt>

✔ 200 OK 1.67s - 117 Bytes - text/plain; charset=utf-8

✔ No errors found!

#### Access Test to /

User-agent	Access?	Reason
*	yes	no Disallow directive found <i>This is the default access policy for any robot without a matching User-agent field.</i>

#### Rule records

```
1 User-agent: *
2   Disallow: /wp-admin/
3   Disallow: /wp-includes/
```

Luckily, no robots.txt errors for Northbound Digital!

In Google Webmaster Tools, you can also identify which URL's of your site, if any, are being blocked by the file.

## XML Sitemaps

An XML sitemap is basically a roadmap for search engine crawlers that lets them easily find all of your site's pages.

Don't have a sitemap yet? If you have a Wordpress website, there are many simple plugins that can create an XML sitemap. If not, you can head [here to generate one for your website](#).

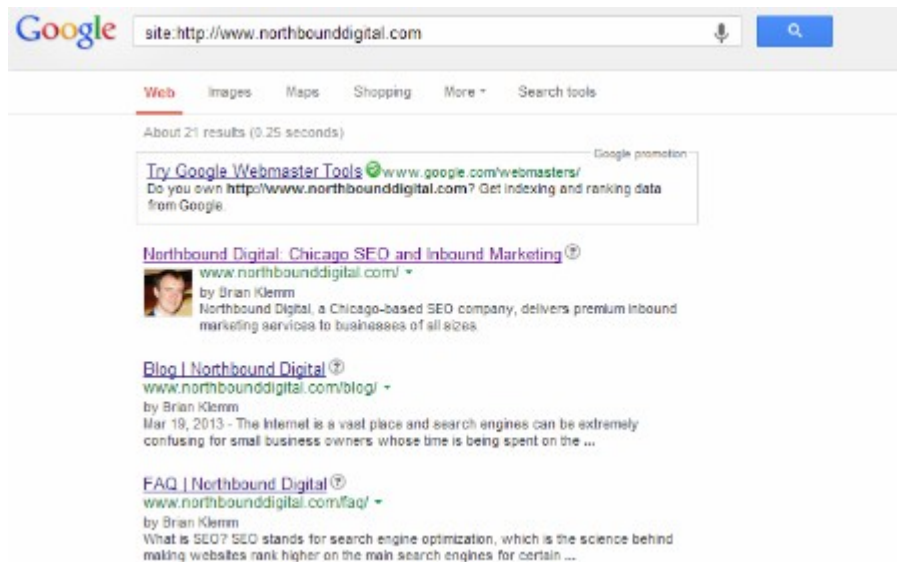
Here is a short video for learning [how to submit your sitemap to Google](#).

# Site Indexation

Site indexation refers to how many pages within your website are found in the search engines. If the search engine doesn't know about certain pages of your business website, then it can't rank the pages.

We want to verify that your website is indexed in the major search engines - Google, Bing, and Yahoo. Type this in to find out - "site:http://yourwebsiteURL.com". So, for our company, I would head to Google and type in "site:http://www.NorthboundDigital.com" and see what it shows. After Google, I would check Bing and Yahoo and make sure my website is showing up.

Here's what I found for our website:



The screenshot shows a Google search for the query "site:http://www.northbounddigital.com". The search bar is at the top, and the results are displayed below. The first result is a "Google promotion" for "Try Google Webmaster Tools" with a link to "www.google.com/webmasters/". Below that is a result for "Northbound Digital: Chicago SEO and Inbound Marketing" with a link to "www.northbounddigital.com/". The result includes a small profile picture of Brian Klemm and a brief description: "Northbound Digital, a Chicago-based SEO company, delivers premium inbound marketing services to businesses of all sizes." Below this are two more results: "Blog | Northbound Digital" and "FAQ | Northbound Digital", both with links to their respective pages on the website.

Google



The screenshot shows a Bing search for the query "site:http://www.northbounddigital.com". The search bar is at the top, and the results are displayed below. The first result is "Chicago SEO and Inbound Marketing | Northbound Digital" with a link to "www.northbounddigital.com/". The result includes a brief description: "Northbound Digital, a Chicago-based SEO company, delivers premium inbound marketing services to businesses of all sizes." Below this are three more results: "Contact Us | Northbound Digital - Chicago SEO and Inbound...", "About | Northbound Digital - Chicago SEO and Inbound Marketing...", and "FAQ | Northbound Digital - Chicago SEO and Inbound Marketing...", each with a link to their respective pages on the website.

Bing





Yahoo

If your website isn't showing up, read this article: [8 Reasons Your Site Isn't Getting Indexed](#)

## Canonicalization

Check your website's "www" and "non-www" URL's to make sure they both work. If you don't normally use the www in your URL, you want the www version to re-direct to the non-www version, and vice versa.

I went to Google and typed in:

<http://www.northbounddigital.com>

<http://northbounddigital.com>

The second one re-directs to the www version. Good!

If your website doesn't re-direct from one to the other, [here is how you can get it done](#).

## Site Speed

### [Google PageSpeed](#)

**Make the Web Faster**

**PageSpeed Tools**

Analyze and optimize your website with PageSpeed tools to implement the web performance best practices.

Fast and optimized pages lead to higher visitor engagement, retention, and conversions. The PageSpeed family of tools is designed to help you optimize the performance of your website. PageSpeed Insights provides help you identify performance best practices that can be applied to your site, and PageSpeed optimization tools can help you automate the process.

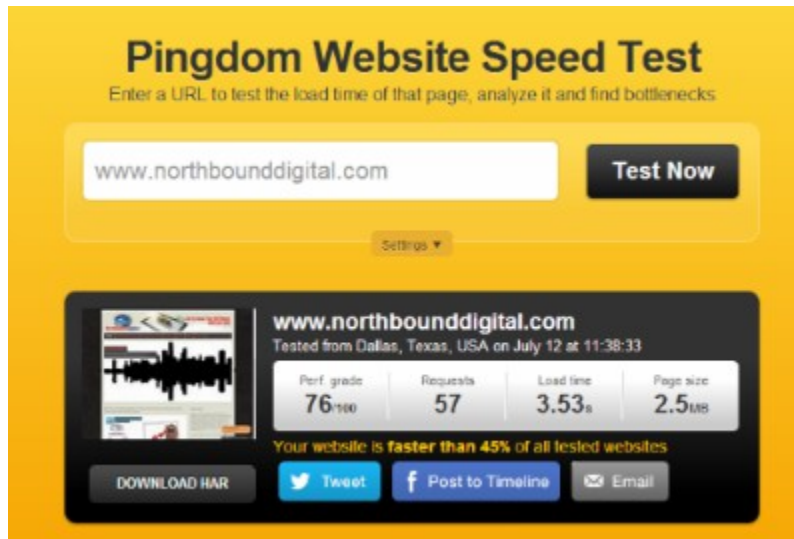
**Analysis**

- Analyze your site online
- Install browser extensions (Chrome, Firefox)
- Use the Insights API
- Learn about Insights, rules and FAQ

**Optimization**

- Use PageSpeed Service
- Install PageSpeed on Apache or Nginx (Download)
- Explore the PageSpeed SDK

## [Pingdom Website Speed Test](#)



Check your website with one of these. Faster is obviously better. It's not a major issue if your website isn't crazy fast, but website speed IS a part of the ranking algorithm, even though it is a very small part of it. The Northbound Digital website is slower than we would like, but I wouldn't fret about the results unless it says something like, "Your website is faster than 12% of all tested websites".

Another reason website speed is important is because users don't want to spend time waiting for a website to load. If you have a slow website, there are visitors who will click the back button if the page doesn't load right away. Slow loading pages have been shown to have higher bounce rates than quicker ones, which means people do in fact leave if the page takes to long to load.

Further reading: [How Loading Time Affects Your Bottom Line](#)

## **Broken Links/404 Errors**

Broken links are bad for your website for many reasons. First, it is horrible for user experience. Let's say a visitor comes to your site and wants to go to your services page, only to click the link and see a 404 (not found) page. They won't stay around and search for the right link; they'll go to your competitors website instead. Also, search engine crawlers hate broken links because links are basically a way around a website, and when there are some that don't work, it signifies to Google the website probably isn't worthy of a top spot.

To find broken links on your website, go to "Advanced Report" in Screaming Frog and click the "Client Error (4xx) in Links". This will export it to Excel where you can see which pages have broken links on them.



	A	B	C	D	E	F	G
1	Client Error (4xx) In Links						
2	Type	Source	Destination	Alt Text	Anchor	Status Code	Status
3	IMG	http://www.northbounddigital.com/	http://www.northbounddigital.com/wp-content/themes/canvas/functions/thumb.php			400	Bad Request
4	HREF	http://www.northbounddigital.com/	https://plus.google.com/111646962416090784353?rel=publisher		Google+	404	Not Found
5	HREF	http://www.northbounddigital.com/about/	https://plus.google.com/111646962416090784353?rel=publisher		Google+	404	Not Found
6	HREF	http://www.northbounddigital.com/local-seo	https://plus.google.com/111646962416090784353?rel=publisher		Google+	404	Not Found
7	HREF	http://www.northbounddigital.com/contact	https://plus.google.com/111646962416090784353?rel=publisher		Google+	404	Not Found
8	HREF	http://www.northbounddigital.com/blog/	https://plus.google.com/111646962416090784353?rel=publisher		Google+	404	Not Found
9	HREF	http://www.northbounddigital.com/inbound	https://plus.google.com/111646962416090784353?rel=publisher		Google+	404	Not Found
10	HREF	http://www.northbounddigital.com/faq/	https://plus.google.com/111646962416090784353?rel=publisher		Google+	404	Not Found
11	HREF	http://www.northbounddigital.com/category	https://plus.google.com/111646962416090784353?rel=publisher		Google+	404	Not Found
12	HREF	http://www.northbounddigital.com/four-seo	https://plus.google.com/111646962416090784353?rel=publisher		Google+	404	Not Found
13	HREF	http://www.northbounddigital.com/author/t	https://plus.google.com/111646962416090784353?rel=publisher		Google+	404	Not Found
14	HREF	http://www.northbounddigital.com/analytics	https://plus.google.com/111646962416090784353?rel=publisher		Google+	404	Not Found
15	HREF	http://www.northbounddigital.com/why-sm	https://plus.google.com/111646962416090784353?rel=publisher		Google+	404	Not Found
16	HREF	http://www.northbounddigital.com/chicago	https://plus.google.com/111646962416090784353?rel=publisher		Google+	404	Not Found
17	HREF	http://www.northbounddigital.com/tag/smal	https://plus.google.com/111646962416090784353?rel=publisher		Google+	404	Not Found
18	HREF	http://www.northbounddigital.com/does-yo	https://plus.google.com/111646962416090784353?rel=publisher		Google+	404	Not Found
19	HREF	http://www.northbounddigital.com/tag/gue	https://plus.google.com/111646962416090784353?rel=publisher		Google+	404	Not Found
20	HREF	http://www.northbounddigital.com/tag/chic	https://plus.google.com/111646962416090784353?rel=publisher		Google+	404	Not Found
21	HREF	http://www.northbounddigital.com/northbo	https://plus.google.com/111646962416090784353?rel=publisher		Google+	404	Not Found
22	HREF	http://www.northbounddigital.com/why-out	https://plus.google.com/111646962416090784353?rel=publisher		Google+	404	Not Found
23	HREF	http://www.northbounddigital.com/contact/	https://plus.google.com/111646962416090784353?rel=publisher		Google+	404	Not Found

Above is the 404 report for Northbound Digital. Whoops - looks like my Google+ link broke!

## URL'S

When analyzing the URL for a specific page, here is what to look for:

- How long is it? Under 100 characters is a good length.
- Is it user-friendly? You want people to be able to remember the URL. Keep dashes out if you don't need them.
- Is it static? Static URL's usually contain numbers, letters, and dashes. Dynamic URL's will have random characters like &, \$, #. We want our URL's to be static.
- Is the keyword in it? You want the keywords you are trying to rank for in the URL.

To check the length of your URL's in Screaming Frog, click the "URI" tab at the top and scroll over to the "Length" column. If you have some that are too long, that's OK; don't start changing your URL's. Just remember the above guidelines in the future.

## Title Tags

We want to always include our keywords in the title tags in a natural way.

If you don't have title tags, add them in (with keywords, of course). Use your location if it is applicable (Chicago, IL or Chicago Lincoln Park, etc.). Let's say you own a dry cleaning business called Todd's in Chicago's South Loop neighborhood. A good title tag for the homepage would be "Chicago South Loop Dry Cleaning | Todd's Dry Cleaners". People know exactly what type of business it is, the name of the business, and where it's located.

To see your page titles in Screaming Frog, click the "Page Titles" tab and it will show the Address, along with Title 1 and the Title Length. Ideally, you want your page titles to be between 50 and 65 characters in length.

Internal	External	Response Codes	URI	Page Titles	Meta Description	Meta Keywords	H1	H2	Images	Directives	Custom
Filter: All Export Search											
			Address	Occurrences	Title 1	Title 1 Length					
			http://www.northbounddigital.com/	1	Chicago SEO and Inbound Marketing, Chicago Search Engine Optimiz...	69					
			http://www.northbounddigital.com/inbound-marketing/	1	Inbound Marketing   Northbound Digital	28					
			http://www.northbounddigital.com/local-seo/	1	Local SEO   Northbound Digital	30					
			http://www.northbounddigital.com/about/	1	About   Northbound Digital	26					
			http://www.northbounddigital.com/blog/	1	Blog   Northbound Digital	25					
			http://www.northbounddigital.com/category/seo/	1	SEO   Northbound Digital	24					
			http://www.northbounddigital.com/four-seo-fundamentals-small-businesses-need-to-ino...	1	4 SEO Fundamentals Small Businesses Need to Know   Northbound ...	69					
			http://www.northbounddigital.com/faq/	1	FAQ   Northbound Digital	24					
			http://www.northbounddigital.com/analytcs-tracking/	1	Analytics Tracking   Northbound Digital	38					
			http://www.northbounddigital.com/author/brian/	1	Brian   Northbound Digital	26					
			http://www.northbounddigital.com/contact-us/	1	Contact Us   Northbound Digital	31					
			http://www.northbounddigital.com/why-small-businesses-need-to-embrace-seo-and-inbo...	1	Why Small Businesses NEED to Embrace SEO and Inbound Marketing...	83					
			http://www.northbounddigital.com/tag/small-business/	1	Small Business   Northbound Digital	35					
			http://www.northbounddigital.com/northbound-digital-seo-how-it-works/	1	Northbound Digital SEO: How It Works   Northbound Digital	57					
			http://www.northbounddigital.com/does-your-website-actually-deserve-to-be-in-the-top-10...	1	Does Your Website Actually Deserve to be in the Top 10 Search Result...	91					
			http://www.northbounddigital.com/contact/	1	Contact   Northbound Digital	28					
			http://www.northbounddigital.com/chicago-small-business-get-more-website-traffic/	1	Five Ways Your Chicago Small Business Can Gain More Website Traffi...	88					
			http://www.northbounddigital.com/why-outsourcing-seo-can-be-harmful-to-your-brand/	1	Why Outsourcing SEO Can Be Harmful to Your Brand   Northbound Dig...	69					
			http://www.northbounddigital.com/tag/guest-post/	1	Guest Post   Northbound Digital	31					
			http://www.northbounddigital.com/tag/chicago-small-business/	1	Chicago Small Business   Northbound Digital	43					

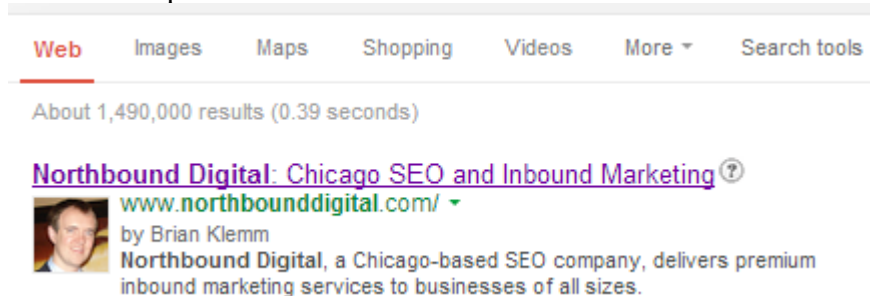
Page Titles in Screaming Frog

Keep the title tag unique to the one page (don't use the same title tags over and over.)

# Meta descriptions, Meta Keywords, and Heading Tags

## Meta Descriptions

A meta description is intended to be a brief and concise summary of the content of a page. In the search engine results, the meta description is the area under the URL.



The meta description above is "Northbound Digital, a Chicago-based SEO company, delivers premium inbound marketing services to businesses of all sizes."

While not used as an actual ranking factor, meta descriptions are still very important. They have a major effect on the click through rate, or CTR, of a given page. If you have a custom, informative meta description that is relevant to your page and your competitor has nothing, you are going to get more clicks than them, even if they rank higher.

Meta descriptions should be no more than 160 characters in length, including space and punctuation. Anything over that will get cut off. Also, Google considers under 51 characters to be too short. So, keep those meta descriptions between 52 and ~150 characters!

Suggestion: Spend enough time creating quality meta descriptions so they stand out from your competitors.

Further reading about meta descriptions: [Learn About Meta Descriptions at Moz](#) and [6 Ways to Craft Better Meta Descriptions That Rocks the SERP's](#)

## Meta Keywords

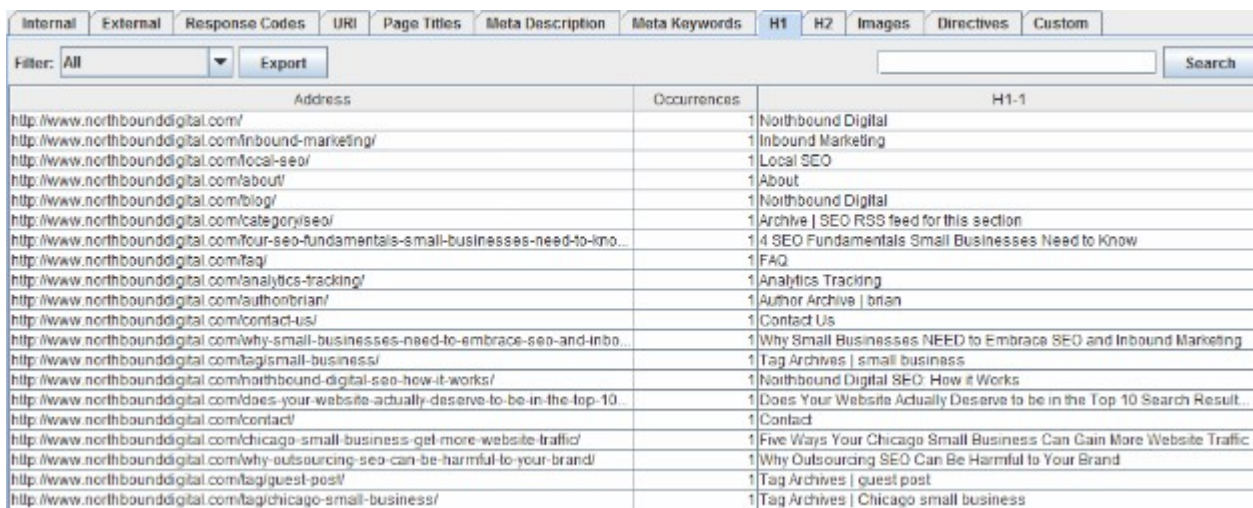
Many people wrongly assume that the meta keywords are an important ranking tool for their website. They stuff keyword after keyword in there and expect to rank for them. Matt Cutts from Google actually [stated here in 2009](#) that they don't use meta keywords in web ranking. It is widely believed none of the major search engines do anymore.

I always advise to leave the meta keywords blank, so that competitors can't easily see what you are trying to rank for.

To check the meta keywords on your site in Screaming Frog, make sure the “Internal” tab at the top is clicked, then move the cursor to the right and you will come to the “Meta Keyword 1” column.

## Heading Tags

In the past, it was generally accepted that you want to put your keywords in the H1 heading tag. Lately, though, it seems like the effectiveness of putting your keywords in the heading tags has diminished, and perhaps, might not even matter at all anymore. If you can easily and naturally put the keywords in the heading tag, I recommend adding them in. It is not worth it if you have to spend a large amount of time on the task, however.



The screenshot shows the Screaming Frog software interface with the 'H1' tab selected. The table below represents the data shown in the 'H1-1' column of the software.

Address	Occurrences	H1-1
http://www.northbounddigital.com/	1	Northbound Digital
http://www.northbounddigital.com/inbound-marketing/	1	Inbound Marketing
http://www.northbounddigital.com/local-seo/	1	Local SEO
http://www.northbounddigital.com/about/	1	About
http://www.northbounddigital.com/blog/	1	Northbound Digital
http://www.northbounddigital.com/category/seo/	1	Archive   SEO RSS feed for this section
http://www.northbounddigital.com/four-seo-fundamentals-small-businesses-need-to-know...	1	4 SEO Fundamentals Small Businesses Need to Know
http://www.northbounddigital.com/faq/	1	FAQ
http://www.northbounddigital.com/analytics-tracking/	1	Analytics Tracking
http://www.northbounddigital.com/author/brian/	1	Author Archive   brian
http://www.northbounddigital.com/contact-us/	1	Contact Us
http://www.northbounddigital.com/why-small-businesses-need-to-embrace-seo-and-inbo...	1	Why Small Businesses NEED to Embrace SEO and Inbound Marketing
http://www.northbounddigital.com/tag/small-business/	1	Tag Archives   small business
http://www.northbounddigital.com/northbound-digital-seo-how-it-works/	1	Northbound Digital SEO: How it Works
http://www.northbounddigital.com/does-your-website-actually-deserve-to-be-in-the-top-10...	1	Does Your Website Actually Deserve to be in the Top 10 Search Result...
http://www.northbounddigital.com/contact/	1	Contact
http://www.northbounddigital.com/chicago-small-business-get-more-website-traffic/	1	Five Ways Your Chicago Small Business Can Gain More Website Traffic
http://www.northbounddigital.com/why-outsourcing-seo-can-be-harmful-to-your-brand/	1	Why Outsourcing SEO Can Be Harmful to Your Brand
http://www.northbounddigital.com/tag/guest-post/	1	Tag Archives   guest post
http://www.northbounddigital.com/tag/chicago-small-business/	1	Tag Archives   Chicago small business

H1 tags in Screaming Frog

In Screaming Frog, click on the “H1” tab and it will show the H1 tags for each page.

Further reading about heading tags: [Do H1 Tags Still Help SEO?](#)

# Duplicate Content

Duplicate content exists when two (or more) pages share the same content. It seems fairly harmless from the outside, but duplicate content can cause BIG issues with search engine optimization.

When there are multiple pages on your website with the exact same (or very similar) content, the search engine spiders often struggle to figure out which version they should show in their index. Oftentimes, they end up indexing the wrong version. Recently, websites with large amounts of duplicate content have seen their search engine rankings completely fall of the map, so ensuring your website is free of duplicate content is very important.

To find duplicate content in Screaming Frog, click the “URI” tab at the top and move the filter to “Duplicate”. It will show the pages on your site that have duplicates. You are able to export the results to Excel as well. If you find duplicate pages on your business website, [head here](#) to figure out ways to fix it.

Further reading: [Duplicate Content Demystified](#)

# Website Content

The content of your website is extremely important in determining what your website ranks for.

There is no "right" number of words to have on a page for SEO purposes. Matt Cutts from Google said, "If you have more content on your homepage, there's more text for Googlebot to find". I take this as meaning text is still important, so make sure you thoroughly describe your business without bogging the copy down with unimportant information. Engage the readers and keep them on your website. Don't write your copy with the search engines in mind, either; think of your audience when writing it.

**We built the company that we'd want to do  
business with. We hope you do too.**

<p><b>1 Useful is forever</b> Bells and whistles wear off, but usefulness never does. We build useful software that does just what you need and nothing you don't.</p>	<p><b>5 The basics are beautiful</b> We'll never overlook what really matters. The basics. Great service, ease of use, honest pricing, and respect for our customer's time, money, and trust.</p>
<p><b>2 Great service is everything</b> We're famous for fast and friendly customer service. We work hard to make sure we live up to that reputation every day. See how our customers rate our service.</p>	<p><b>6 No hidden fees or secret prices</b> We believe everyone is entitled to the best price we can offer. Our prices are public, published right on our site, and the same no matter who you are.</p>
<p><b>3 Clarity is king</b> S buzzwords, lingo, and sensationalized sales-and-marketing-speak have no place at 37signals. We communicate clearly and honestly.</p>	<p><b>7 Software should be easy</b> Our products are intuitive. You'll pick them up in seconds or minutes, not hours, days or weeks. We don't sell you training because you don't need it.</p>
<p><b>4 Our customers are our investors</b> Our customers fund our daily operations by paying for our products. We answer to them — not investors, the stock market, or a board of directors.</p>	<p><b>8 Long-term contracts are obscene</b> No one likes being locked into something they don't want anymore. Our customers can cancel at any time, no questions asked. No setup/termination fees either.</p>

The 37 Signals (37signals.com) homepage is a great example of high-quality content. It is full of informative, interesting, and engaging material.

Your goal with the homepage is to get your readers interested enough to go deeper into your website



and learn about your services/products.

Further reading on Website Content: [The Science Behind Long Copy](#)

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Congrats, you made it all the way through the guide! You are now the proud owner of an SEO-friendly business website!

Ideally, you should go through this guide every couple months and keep your website as fresh as possible. If you perform this website audit regularly, you will be able to keep a leg up on the competition that is neglecting their SEO needs.

Please share this guide with any friends, family, or other business owners who could use some SEO help! Thanks!



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