MarketplaceOps

The Definitive Guide to
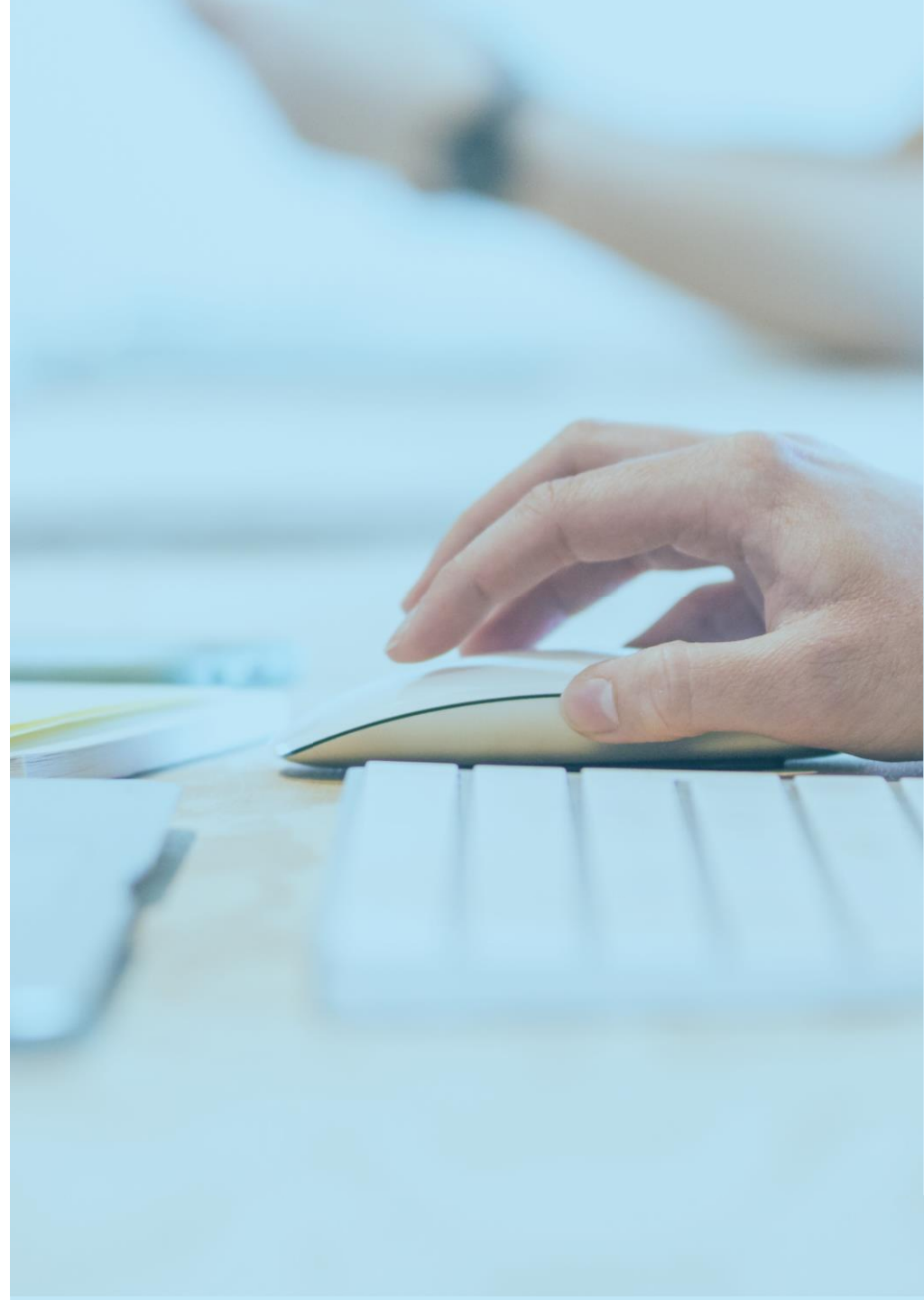
Amazon SEO

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For the month of May 2019, MarketplaceOps is proud to share with you our expertise when it comes to Amazon's search engine optimization function.

This is to answer the main sales question: **how can we put our products (against the competition) in front of the buyers?**

In this guide, you will learn:

- What is Amazon SEO?
- How to develop an Amazon SEO strategy?
- What are the best Amazon SEO tools to use out there?

Overview

E-Commerce, whether desktop or mobile, has considerably grown through the years. Amazon is no longer the online book retailer that it was decades ago. It is now the biggest name in eCommerce and it accounts for more than 49% of all online sales worldwide.

Amazon has been successfully gaining the trust and confidence of the millions of online shoppers all over the globe. Since 2015, it was reported that more people are going straight to Amazon (instead of Google) when looking for specific products in mind. In fact, **over 49% of consumers turn directly to Amazon for their product searches**. People on Amazon aren't there to idly browse or window shop. **They're on Amazon, ready to make a purchase**.

But given the large number of online shoppers who rely on Amazon, one mustn't forget the fact that there are over 2 million Amazon sellers (as of Jan 2018) who compete to get a share of these buyers. So if you are among those 2 million sellers, *wouldn't you want to do everything it takes to take advantage of that high level of consumer purchase intent?*

FERNANDO CRUZ

"Every single eCommerce site has a Search Box. And today, there is a significantly bigger number of Searchers than Browsers. In fact, many studies have shown that 43-45% of eCommerce site visitors immediately go to the Search Box. These Searchers are 2-3 times more likely to convert than Browsers. So if you'll be able to help eCommerce shoppers quickly find what they're looking for, you will likely sell more."

NICK YOUNG

"The fundamental secret to eCommerce revenue growth is not more traffic, but more conversions from existing traffic. If your product listing isn't optimized for conversions, it's like pouring water into a leaky bucket - traffic will "leak out" without turning into sales. You could improve your sales by up to 300% simply by optimizing your listings for conversions. Remember, COPY still is KING."

SEO 101: Importance of Keywords

An online buyers' eCommerce journey starts with a simple search about products they're looking for.. When they go to Amazon, the buyer types specific **keywords** - brand, product name, general product description, product category, and other words they'd remember about the product. From here, Amazon shows them product results that are deemed the most relevant to their search. This process is called **Search Engine Optimization (SEO)**.

A seller's immediate strategy should be developed around this functionality or SEO:

"Anticipating how target customers will search for your specific products, what specific keywords words will they use, and how do you ensure that your products appear for these keywords."

And in order to do that, you must first understand how Amazon's Search Algorithm works.

In a highly competitive and aggressive eCommerce environment like Amazon, it just isn't sufficient that you use only one keyword research tool. In fact, you would have to do your research again and update your keywords (and your copy) from time-to-time even after launch. Here are some of the most useful Amazon keyword tools that will help you enhance product visibility and drive traffic:

- *Merchantwords*
- *Helium10*
- *Viral Launch*

Meet A9: Amazon's Search Algorithm

Just like Google and other search engines, Amazon uses its own algorithm in order **to rank products for various keyword searches.** That's A9 (or Amazon SEO). This algorithm utilizes a plethora of parameters in order to choose which products to display on the SERPs (Search Engine Results Pages), and in what order they'll appear.

Once a buyer goes to Amazon and types in what he/she wants in the Search Field, the product results will appear in 2 ways:

1. **List View** - displaying 15-16 products per page
2. **Grid View** - displaying 24-25 products per page

Making it to the search list and in what order will depend on how good the product listing had been optimised to appear in search results. Keep in mind that **your product(s) position in the SERPs can make or break you.** How? Here are some facts and figures directly from Amazon:

- 81% of clicks are on brands residing on the first page of results
- 70% of their customers never go beyond the first page
- 35% of Amazon customers click on the first product on a results page
- The first three items on the platforms SERPs account for 64% of clicks

"The difference between Google's search algorithm and Amazon's A9 is simple—9 out of 10 searchers on *Google aren't there to buy while Amazon's searchers are there with the* intent to purchase. Amazon has remained to be the Top 1 starting place for online shoppers because it is more effective for searching the products they want to buy.* **The A9 algorithm is customer-focused.** *It's purpose is to* provide the customer with the best possible options from its entire catalogue. It will select and rank the best-selling products, products with the best margins, products from the top performing sellers, and products *matched to the shopper's past activity."*

Amazon's Search Engine Ranking

In order to learn how to properly optimize your product listings, you first have to understand what determines the SERP rankings.

Every seller must optimize product listings for:

- **Visibility**
- **Relevancy**
- **Conversion**

OPTIMIZE FOR VISIBILITY

- Means making your products more visible than your competitors so that buyers can find you and buy from you. Your visibility will also be able to help capture the percentage of online shoppers who have more time to browse and those who are on Amazon to kill time, just because online shopping has already become a habit.

OPTIMIZE FOR RELEVANCY

- Means you're making your product listing content in such a way that it matches the search terms or exact text that the buyers key in, in order to find what they're looking for. A9 takes into account every single detail in your product listing--from the title, description, and other details in the backend.

OPTIMIZE FOR CONVERSION

- This simply means turning clicks into actual sales. Amazon A9 also takes into account the number of earlier purchases of that particular product, availability of stock, and your general performance as an Amazon seller. If your product is priced way too high or too low as compared to your competitors, if you have no available stock for that item, and if you're not really doing well in the marketplace, don't get your hopes up too high in ranking.

The First Step: KEYWORD RESEARCH

What you need to do first and foremost is research all the possible keywords and keyword phrases that your potential buyers could possibly enter in the Search Field so that they would end up finding *and* choosing your product.

There are various keyword research tools available on the web such as Viral Launch, Helium 10, Sonar, and SellerApp, among others. Not only do they list down all the keywords for each kind of product on Amazon; but they also aid you in choosing which ones you really need by ranking them according to relevance, search volume, competition, and other factors. By utilizing these helpful tools, you will be able to select and collect the best keywords for the product(s) that you're selling.

After compiling your list of keywords for a product, you can now jump to the next important step in Amazon SEO: **knowing which keywords you need to prioritize and where to place them in your product listing content** -- *that brings us to the next part of this guide.*

How to Optimize Amazon Product Listings

Optimizing product listings is done by knowing where exactly you need to place the most important and most relevant keywords and keyword phrases in your product listing content.

Keep in mind that keyword stuffing is a thing of the past. Remember that Amazon's priority are the buyers. So, they would like product listings to be more informative, easier to read, and free from misleading and erroneous content. It will actually hurt your ranking if you repeat the same keywords twice or more.

What you need to master is **keyword placement**. It is one of the most important factors in Amazon SEO. To know exactly where to place your keywords, know the crucial real estate or parts of the product listing.

   Prioritize them according to this: (ranked according to importance, 1 being the highest)
   1. Product Title
   2. Key Product Features (Bullet Points)
   3. Product Description
   4. Backend Search Terms

Product Title

Titles are basically the very first thing customers will see and read when searching for products. Hence, Amazon treats it as the first and most important real estate in the product listing. That's why you need to place your most relevant and most important keywords (short and long tail) here.

Amazon allows only up to **250 characters for Product Titles.** But take note, you should never stuff your titles with keywords. Make it readable and sensible. While placing the most important details of your product in the title, see to it that contains your relevant keywords in the most pleasing and grammatical way possible. The Amazon bots may actually detect keyword stuffing in the titles and they could suppress your listing.

Bamboo Charcoal Air Purifying Bag (4 Pack), 200g Natural Air Freshener Bags, Activated Charcoal Odor Eliminators, Car Air Purifier, Closet Freshener, Home Air Freshener, Charcoal Bags in Grey Color

2,340 customer reviews | 170 answered questions

Amazon's Choice

Here are some of the things you need to take note of when composing Product Titles:

- Capitalize every word in the title *except* the words FOR and AND.

- Use numerals instead of spelling them out

- Make sure title makes sense by naturally breaking up details or phrases with punctuation marks like a comma (,), hyphen (-), or a vertical bar (|)

- Mention the color only if there are other color variations of your product

- Mention the size and quantity if they are key deciding factors for your product

- Include variations of important keywords your buyers may use (e.g. "washcloth" and "wash cloth")

Remember, keyword choice AND order are very crucial here as it will dramatically influence your Amazon search ranking. Some patterns and formulas may be effective for certain products depending on their category. So make sure that you take this one seriously and test which one works best for you.

Key Product Features

Previously or commonly known as the product listing Bullet Points, the **5 Key Product Features** are deemed the second most important part of the listing as it is displayed right after the main title. And while they don't literally affect visibility, what's inside those 5 bullet points will actually influence your product listing's **relevance and conversion**.

Here, Amazon gives you the chance to properly introduce your product features and benefits in a concise and readable manner. Giving you about **250-500 character space** per bullet point, you will be able to speak more of your product while incorporating your next set of important keywords here. Take advantage of this space to the best that you can.

Although the keywords in the Product Features don't carry the same impact as those in your Product Title, know that the A9 algorithm still index the words there. So it will also benefit your ranking if you put some careful thought in composing the text in every bullet point.

Here are some tips on writing Product Features:

- Highlight only the 5 most important features and benefits that you want your buyers to know about your product

- Use this part to educate your buyers on what makes your product different from your competitors

- Write all numbers in numerals, no need to spell them out

- Be straight to the point

- Capitalize the beginning of every bullet point

- Do not end each bullet point with a punctuation mark

- Avoid including company-specific, promotional, shipping-related, or pricing information

Product Description

While the real estate provided for the product description does not directly affect ranking, the text here is still indexed by Amazon's A9, so it is best that you take advantage of this area in the product listing as well.

Since Amazon gives you a maximum of **2,000 characters** for your Product Description, use this as an opportunity to somewhat tell a story about your product. What you couldn't mention in the Product Features part, you can include here.

While still incorporating relevant keywords in the text, make sure that your copy is still easy to read and understand. Since 2,000 characters would mean you could write the description in paragraphs, it is best that you use Simple HTML in order to make the content easy on the eyes. Long heavy paragraphs are not really attractive to online shoppers so there's a good chance they'll just skip reading that part. So you can use HTML to break them up in lines, shorter paragraphs, or bullets/list form.

Here are some tips:

- Don't stuff your copy with keywords; make text readable and grammatically correct
- Use free HTML converting tools available on the internet
- 'Bold' certain parts of the text to highlight details
- Do not include company-specific information, promos, email addresses, websites, or info that promote your other products
- Know all the requirements and restrictions about your product category before composing the description
- It's better to end the description with a strong call to action

If you are investing on creating good EBCs (Enhanced Brand Content) and even if the Product Description will no longer be visible on your product listing page, know that the Amazon A9 algorithm will still take the description into account and words within it will still be indexed.

Backend Search Terms

After utilizing the Title, Product Features, and Description as real estate for your important keywords, it's good to know that Amazon gives you an 'invisible' space for you to put all the other keywords you couldn't really incorporate in your content: the **Backend Search Terms**. You are allowed to put in as much keywords as you like, in a maximum of **250 characters**.

You will be able to access the backend keywords here:

Inventory > Manage Inventory > Actions > Edit Details > Keywords

Once there, here are some of the things you need to keep in mind when utilizing the backend keywords field:

- Include all keywords that are misspelled; those that do not make sense; or those that are grammatically incorrect
- No need to use commas, spaces will do
- Here, the order or placement of keywords is not important anymore; as long as you type the keyword in the field, it will be indexed
- It is useless to repeat words
- You can create out-of-the-box and spelling variations of keywords, but make sure to think about it first (if it is really possible for your potential buyers to type that in the search box)

Other Factors that Affect Amazon Rankings

The Amazon A9 is indeed a complicated algorithm. It takes a huge amount of time, effort, and understanding for you to be able to master its ins and outs. And even though the A9 is continuously maturing-- yes, frequent unpredictable updates are being made, take refuge in the fact that optimizing your product listings in the best possible way is totally doable.

In fact, there are still other factors that affect your rankings in the Search Results Pages aside from strategically positioning the most relevant keywords in your Product Listing Content. Some of these are:

- **Sales Performance**
- **Pricing & Stock Availability**
- **Images**
- **Customer Reviews**

Sales Performance

We have mentioned earlier in this guide that your sales performance is also taken into account when being ranked in the Amazon SERPs. Since online shoppers are top priority, when they search for a certain product, Amazon displays the **best possible products** that match the keywords--and that includes the *best-selling and most popular items* in that category.

The more frequently your product sells, chances are, the more customers will purchase that same item. And simply because of this, Amazon will push your product higher in the search results pages. Top selling products simply rank higher than those who don't really perform well. So remember, in Amazon SEO, SALES is King.

Pricing & Stock Availability

According to BigCommerce, "In many cases, buyers use Amazon to compare prices and products they are interested in purchasing." And because the product price is one of the buyer's ultimate considerations when deciding whether or not to buy a product, the A9 algorithm also takes into account the price of your product.

So when setting the product price, be sure to check your competition's pricing strategy for identical products. Never make irrational markups or markdowns. Best practice is to **beat or match your competitor's price.** Your ranking will then suffer if your price is just too far from the 'usual' prices of that kind of product.

Moreover, as A9 is an intelligent algorithm that provides the best possible set of products for interested buyers, understand that it will never recommend a product of yours that doesn't have any available stock in the inventory. Remember, Amazon's goal is to sell more to interested buyers - *so it's just common sense that they will only recommend those that are currently available.*

Customer Reviews

If they say sales is King, we say Product or **Customer Reviews is Queen.** Online shoppers are now wise enough to check if any product has a considerable amount of negative reviews, giving them just enough reason to forego the purchase and click on the next best item. Reviews actually strengthen a product's social proof and sends a message to potential customers saying the product is actually worth their buck.

Because Amazon knows online shoppers rely on reviews to make informed decisions, both A9 and other Amazon teams have been working hard to find those brands who use fake positive review services.

The product reviews influence the click-through-rates. So **if you want your product listing to be optimized for conversion, you have to take the customer reviews part really seriously.** The more *real positive reviews* your product has, the more value it has and the more chances of it being ranked higher.

Images

Even if product images do not have keywords, *they're worth a thousand words,* as the saying goes. Never underestimate the power of high-quality appealing images. While it's possible for a buyer to purchase something online without reading its entire description, it's really impossible for them to buy something without seeing what that item looks like.

Images greatly affect a product listing's CTR (click through rate). Actually, studies have shown that online shoppers take a look at the product photos first before reading any of its content. Since they won't be able to inspect the product in person, they would want to see the item in all angles, be able to zoom it in and out to see details, and even see its size reference as the product is being used.

While images do not affect Amazon SEO directly, they are key sales drivers and impact the conversion rate greatly; thus also considered an important ranking factor.

Here are some more tips for you:

- Always make sure you have enough inventory.

- Never add fake positive reviews.

- Use high definition and better resolution images (at least 1000 pixels in width or height to enable the "zoom" function.)

- Follow Amazon's rules in product image submission.

- Always include Lifestyle Images (pictures that show actual use of the product.)

- Show images that demonstrate the product benefits.

- Infographics also help a lot, especially for online shoppers who don't really have the patience and time to read the copy.

- Invest in creating appealing EBCs and even A+ Enhanced Content - if possible.

Key Takeaways

Amazon SEO isn't rocket science and now that you have a clearer understanding of how it works, we're pretty sure that you'll be able to master it in no time.

But just to make it a lot easier for you to remember everything, here's our tip: Remember to always make your products DISCOVERABLE and DESIRABLE.

Making your products DISCOVERABLE means:

- Researching for the best and most relevant keywords for your product

- Creating a cohesive Product Title that contains all the most important keywords

- Crafting a well-written copy that isn't stuffed with keywords but instead tells a story about the product *while* using relevant keyword phrases

- Making sure products are never "out of stock"

- Pricing your product strategically

Making your products DESIRABLE means:

- Making the Product Title appealing and complete in all relative and important information

- Uploading appealing HD Product Images

- Investing in quality EBCs

- Having a good number of positive customer reviews and ratings

- Having Bullet Points that clearly state why the buyers need to purchase your product

- Setting a product price that's reasonable for your target market

- Writing a suitable copy that will appeal and capture your target market

MarketplaceOps

MarketplaceOps is one of LA's leading Amazon Management & Strategy Firm. Founded in 2018, we've been enabling international brands from different industries looking to sell and distribute products on Amazon.

We work hard to ensure we're driving their success in the world's biggest e-commerce platform.

CONTACT US

We can guide you so you can fully optimize your product listings for relevance, visibility, and conversion. In fact, we can do that for you if you really need expert help. We're here to help accelerate your brand growth through Amazon.

Our free initial consultation includes an evaluation of your product distribution, marketing program(s), and profitability metrics.