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SEO CHECKLIST FOR CHAMBER WEBSITES ✔

SEO, which stands for search engine optimization, is the method for improving search engine rankings for your website. It is based on several factors which are all important. There are tasks you should perform on your Chamber's website that contribute to SEO success; this checklist will walk you through each area of your website you need to review and refine.

Quality Content

☐ Quality content is the most important factor in SEO. Google's guidelines suggest content be geared toward being relevant and useful for your users. When the content is of value to them, it will be of value to search engines as well.

Your content should be:
- Diverse – use multiple mediums, such as infographics, videos, blogs, and photographs.
- Original – it should not be duplicated on other areas of your site or other sites.
- Authentic and credible.
- Fresh and continuously updated.
- Interesting and shareable.

Navigation & User Experience

☐ Your website needs to be easy to use. The very best of SEO techniques become ineffective if a website is poorly designed and visitors struggle to find what they need.

Your website should be:
- Easy to use and understand.
- Designed with a navigation bar across the top of each page or down the left side of each page. It should include links to each primary page on your website.
- Built for responsive design so both mobile and tablet users can use it easily. Rankings and results are negatively impacted if your site is not optimized for mobile use.
- Organized with a sitemap. It is helpful for visitors and useful for search engine "spiders" to crawl through.

Keywords

☐ Keywords are the "key" to search engine optimization. They are the words or phrases that people search for to find information online. Make sure you use keywords throughout your Chamber's website.

Increase value using keywords by:
- Brainstorming a list of the words and phrases visitors might use to find your Chamber online. Use Google's Keyword Planner for free help.
- Making them relevant. Keywords should be directly associated with your website content.
- Using words and phrases that people actually search for.
- Remembering that less is more – don't stuff keywords onto your pages. Two to four specific keywords per page is good.
- Placing your keywords in several areas, including: headline, first paragraph, subhead, meta description, and image alt tag.

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Page Titles / Title Tags

☐ Page titles are often what make people decide whether to visit your site when it shows up in search results. You can take steps to make it easier for search engines to find and deliver your content in the search results.

Make sure your title tags:
- Are written for humans, formatted for search engines.
- Include keywords and are descriptive and informative.
- Are unique for each page.
- Include 50-60 characters.

Meta Description

☐ Meta information tells search engines what each page on a website is about. The meta description is the text shown under the title of your page in search engine results.

An effective meta description should:
- Be between 60-150 characters and include relevant keywords.
- Be different for each page.
- Describe the page contents, making users want to click on the link.

Alt Attributes / Images

☐ Search engines cannot "see" images; they can only "read" about them. It is important to use the right words in the right places to make sure your images are of value in searches.

To help search engines understand your images:
- Save images with file names that are descriptive, relevant, and include keywords. For example, do not upload an image named "image4275.jpg." Instead, try "Green_Valley_Builder_Expo.jpg" or "Green Valley_logo.gif."
- Include descriptive text (or meta data) in the "alt" attribute. Keep it short and relevant, just like the file name.
- Save photos as .jpg files and logos as .gif files if possible; search engines look for these formats.
- Keep image file sizes small for faster page loading.

Internal Links

☐ Help boost your search engine rankings with internal links by:
- Ensuring every page links to at least one other page in your site.
- Linking to your related past content within the page text. If both pages use the same keywords, the value increases for both pages. (e.g. If a new blog post refers to a subject you tackled in a previous blog post, link to it within the text.)
- Avoiding the use of "click here" as a link within text. Use descriptive text for the links instead.
- Checking for and repairing broken links.
- Verifying that your site has social badges that link to your social media accounts.

Just as you invested in creating your Chamber's website content, you will find that the investment of time to be smart about SEO is just as valuable. By following these guidelines, your website will attract more traffic and your visitors will appreciate the relevance it provides.