



**SEARCH FOR GOOD:
SEARCH ENGINE
MARKETING FOR
NON-PROFITS**



INTRODUCTION

The importance of a digital presence for charities and non-profits

As a charity or non-profit, you know how important it is to be seen when and where potential donors and supporters are looking for you.

In an increasingly digital world, this means having a strong digital presence so that you can be found online. Building and nurturing a strong digital presence however can take time and funds; both things that are often in short supply for non-profits.

We've created this guidance to give some food for thought on the power Search Engine Marketing (SEM) can have for non-profits when harnessed correctly. We've aimed to provide you with a detailed overview of the fundamentals of search engine marketing and give hints and tips on implementing effective search strategies so that you can maximise the impact of your cause and make the most of your limited resources.

We hope that after reading this paper you will be more familiar with the basics of search engine marketing and be ready to take steps to add search as a channel in your digital strategy.



CONTENTS

What is Search Engine Marketing?	4
Challenges	6
Understanding your audience and your mission	12
Building a strong website foundation	16
SEO + PPC: creating a strong SEM campaign	21
Housing Rights: a case study	37
Conclusion	39
Glossary	40
Sources	41

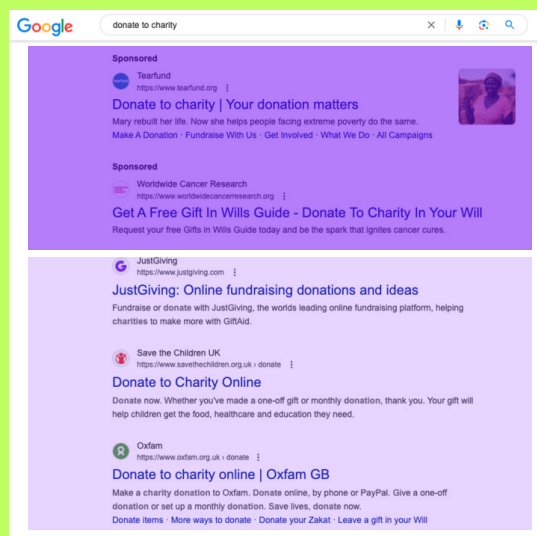
WHAT IS SEARCH ENGINE MARKETING (SEM)?

Just as it sounds, Search Engine Marketing is the activity of marketing your business on search engines. With millions of searches being made every second across the world, being visible on search engines can allow your charity the key opportunity to connect with supporters, donors and users in need of your services at the time they are trying to find you.

How does it work?

The results that are listed when you search for something on a search engine aren't there by accident or luck. Search engines use algorithms to define the best result for any search query, to make sure they are providing the most relevant information to the searcher.

There are two types of result; organic and paid.



◀ PAID

◀ ORGANIC

SEO

SEO (Search Engine Optimisation): Is the activity of increasing the visibility of your website on search engines (Google, Bing etc.) organically.

You do not have to pay for searchers to visit your website through SEO as it involves optimising your website to rank higher on the organic listings of the SERP (Search Engine Results Page).

SEO involves multiple tactics such as website optimisation (technical SEO), increasing links to your website (link building), often through PR, and creating relevant, high-quality content.

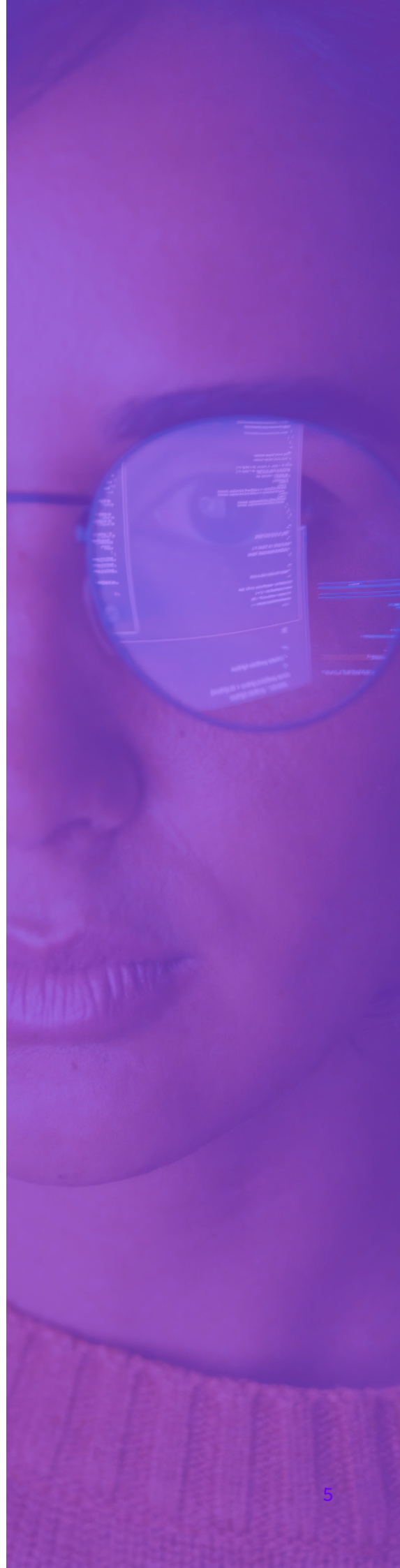
PPC

PPC (Pay Per Click): Is where you pay for each click to your website that you receive. You bid on specific keywords against competitors within your industry for higher visibility on search engines.

Businesses can choose which keywords to bid on, what their advertisements will say and which landing page they will send visitors to. Each search engine will have their own platform for managing these ads, and both Google and Microsoft (Bing) have grants available for non-profits which we will discuss in more detail later.

Using both PPC and SEO in tandem can help yield the best results for your charity's website, by providing both long-term and short-term growth. Both channels complement each other to create a comprehensive approach to visibility on search engines. Where PPC allows your website to achieve almost immediate visibility at a cost, SEO focuses on long term organic growth. By having a combination of SEO and PPC within your digital strategy, you can help your charity to achieve maximum visibility and drive the most donations and support.

We'll discuss how you can develop effective PPC and SEO campaigns further into this whitepaper.

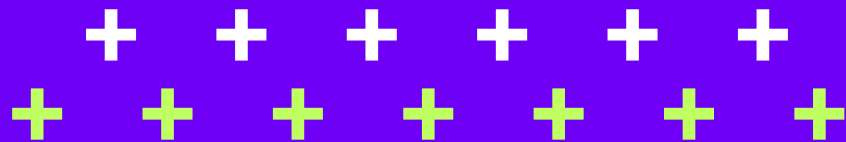


CHALLENGES

It's no secret that every organisation has faced turbulent times over recent years. The Covid-19 pandemic, a recession, Brexit, and political escalations globally, will have had an impact financially and on how many organisations are run. Charities and non-profits have suffered. Costs have gone up for businesses and households alike, which will also impact how much disposable income people have, resulting in less charitable giving. NCVO (The National Council for Voluntary Organisations) have declared this a 'Cost of Giving Crisis' and are calling for support from the government, as well as the public, while providing charities with practical guidance on getting through the crisis. The third sector will need to find new ways of getting more for their money, ensuring they stay visible to potential donors and stay afloat in such uncertainty.



Consequently, the charity sector continues to face unprecedented demand: families and individuals are increasingly likely to turn to the third sector for support during these difficult times. But charities are being asked to do more with less, alongside increased staff wages, lower grant and donation income and rising costs across the board.”
– Grant Thornton, 2024



WHERE DOES SEARCH ENGINE MARKETING (SEM) COME IN?

In today's digital landscape, SEM is a powerful tool for organisations looking to reach new audiences, raise awareness, and drive action. For non-profits and charities, it offers an opportunity to amplify your message and connect with supporters in an overcrowded and competitive online space. We know, if done correctly, that search can make a huge difference to donor numbers, volunteers, and in raising awareness of the cause at-hand.

The potential is significant, but we know that non-profits often face unique challenges when it comes to executing any digital campaign, but particularly with SEM.

From limited budgets to navigating complex tools without dedicated teams, non-profits must overcome a variety of obstacles to maximise their impact. Here, we'll explore the key challenges non-profits and charities encounter with SEM, and how these hurdles can affect your ability to make the most out of marketing efforts.



LIMITED BUDGETS

Non-profits and charitable organisations often have smaller marketing budgets compared to for-profit businesses. While SEM can be effective, the cost of paid search ads (especially in competitive sectors) can quickly drain resources. Maximising ROI (Return On Investment) becomes crucial, and it may be difficult to compete for high-cost keywords with larger organisations who are just bound to have more budget.

With tighter control on finances, non-profits must be laser-focused on maximising ROI. All spend on SEM needs to generate measurable results—whether that’s in the form of donations, volunteer sign-ups, or spreading awareness. However, achieving this level of precision can be difficult without dedicated resources and search marketing experts to regularly monitor and optimise campaigns. This puts pressure on non-profits to be extremely strategic in your keyword selection and targeting, and it often means SEM is put to one side.

LACK OF IN-HOUSE EXPERTISE

Many non-profits and charities do not have dedicated digital marketing teams with expertise in search. This can make it challenging to effectively manage and optimise campaigns. Even if you have a marketing resource, who may have some basic knowledge of Search Engine Optimisation (SEO), you may not necessarily have the skill set to manage an entire search campaign. Without the resources to hire specialists, you may struggle to understand and keep up with

ever-changing SEM best practices. Effective SEM often relies on engaging ads, high-quality landing pages, optimised copy, and creative visuals, but many non-profits lack the resources to create these assets. Let alone ensuring they deliver.

Without strong content, it can be difficult to convert traffic into donors or supporters, even if they are successfully driven to your website through search. This is even the case for larger charities who do have a dedicated marketing professional, but they are often stretched thin and lack the time to do the relevant research and continuous optimisation that search often requires. Marketing is not a one-person job, and elements such as search need a dedicated expert to manage.



SEARCH ENGINE COMPETITION

Charities and non-profits need to compete with businesses for space on the search engine results page, which can drive up costs and make it challenging to stand out. On top of that, larger for-profit organisations are more likely to have dedicated employees who can ensure their digital presence is fully optimised for search.

THE PROBLEM MIGHT BE THAT YOU ARE LACKING VOLUNTEERS TO WORK AT YOUR STORES.

An organisation with a higher budget and expert team will ensure they have local SEO enabled so that any individuals searching for 'Opportunities near me' are directed to their website immediately.

Without the knowledge or skill set in how to set this up and maintain strong search positions, you will always be trumped by your larger counterparts.

If you're like many other non-profits who serve specific communities or causes, it can be even harder to target broad audiences.

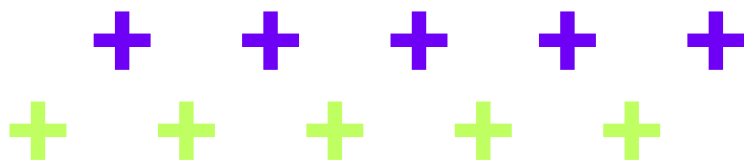
In this case, reaching niche audiences through search engines can be challenging, especially when keywords are too general or when there's not enough search volume for cause-specific terms.

MEASURING IMPACT

With as much money as possible needing to go back into your charitable cause, it is vital to be able to attribute which channels are driving the most growth for your charity, as this is where future time and monetary investment should be made. Tracking the impact of SEM campaigns can be complex, as many goals (e.g. donations, volunteer sign-ups) can be difficult to quantify, particularly if you are using an external donation platform. It is also likely that you're relying on a variety of channels – social media, email, events etc. – so defining which is driving the most impact can be difficult without data analysis know-how.

You may also struggle with brand visibility, especially, again, when competing with larger or well-known organisations. Non-profits often aim to raise awareness rather than sell products, which makes it harder to find the right balance between informative content and compelling calls to action in SEM campaigns.

The battle with not being able to successfully measure impact and prove value can put internal stakeholders at loggerheads, resulting in limited allocation of budget to SEM practices.





FLUCTUATING SUPPORTER BEHAVIOUR

Donor behaviour and interest can vary significantly throughout the year, making campaign management complex.

Depending on the cause your charity focuses on, donor behaviour can fluctuate dramatically throughout the year, making campaign management an ongoing challenge. Unlike businesses with more predictable sales cycles, you're likely to experience peaks and valleys in engagement, interest, and donations—driven by everything from seasonal giving patterns to specific events.

An obvious example is the festive season, often referred to as the “Golden Quarter,”

which is a prime time for donations, as the spirit of giving is at its peak. During these times, paid search campaigns become highly competitive as multiple non-profits launch campaigns targeting festive generosity. This can drive up keyword costs, making it more difficult to stand out and remain within budget.

While in quieter periods, campaigns can result in fewer conversions, meaning non-profits need to balance their ad spend to avoid wasting resources when interest is low.

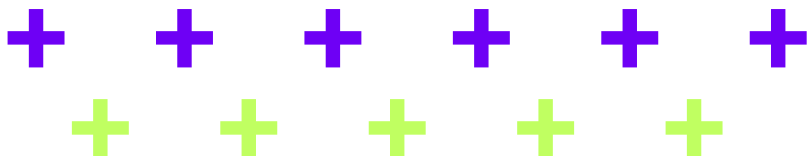
IT SEEMS TOO DIFFICULT.

WHY SHOULD I STILL CONSIDER SEARCH ENGINE MARKETING?

The challenges may seem daunting, but that doesn't mean you should rule out SEM altogether. In fact, if managed correctly, charities and non-profits will see a huge benefit that could support many of the burdens you are currently facing.

With the right guidance on knowing where to spend your time and money, there are many opportunities to be had with search. Failure to onboard a crucial part of digital marketing could lead to your organisation fading into obscurity, losing donor interest and suffering financially, unable to compete and stand up in today's climate. While these challenges may seem daunting to tackle, organisations should focus on overcoming them and recognising the many opportunities to be had with SEM campaigns.

In the remainder of this paper, we will be discussing how you can face these challenges head-on and hopefully see your organisation grow as a result.



02

Lorem ipsum dolor sit amet, consectetur adipiscing elit

03

Lorem ipsum dolor sit amet, consectetur adipiscing elit

04

Lorem ipsum dolor sit amet, consectetur adipiscing elit

UNDERSTANDING YOUR AUDIENCE AND MISSION

Before embarking on any search engine marketing (SEM) strategy, it's essential to have a clear understanding of your audience and mission. Non-profits have a dual objective: raising awareness of your cause and encouraging specific actions, such as donations or volunteer engagement. This means that a focused, mission-aligned SEM strategy is key to making the most of limited resources and the other challenges faced by organisations right now, which might have put a stop to any previous campaigns.

Of course, many established charities and non-profits will already have a clearly defined mission, but the goal of this section is to revisit and reevaluate so that you can align your search and organisation's goals. This will ensure effective keyword research can be conducted, and your campaigns are tailored specifically to you, your donors and supporters.



Your mission statement is a fundamental asset that should influence every part of your non-profit organisation – from your comms to the attitude of your volunteers. That's why creating an effective charity mission statement is critical, particularly during periods of uncertainty.”
– **Charities Aid Foundation, 2024**



DEFINING YOUR TARGET AUDIENCE

At the heart of any non-profit campaign is your cause and mission statement, but with that is also a deep understanding of who you are trying to reach. Non-profits often serve a diverse group of stakeholders, from donors and volunteers to beneficiaries, community partners and trustees. Understanding the unique motivations and behaviours of these groups will help you craft targeted search campaigns that resonate and are remembered.

Due to the potential fluctuations in your donor personas over time, it is a strong recommendation that you conduct market research that is relevant and up to date. Surveys and focus groups are frequently used methods of research and can be highly beneficial when defining your audience, and are often more affordable than you might think. You can also use keyword research and search patterns to give insight into these personas (more on this in a later chapter).

However, if research is out of your budget or you already have clearly defined and updated personas, here are some key steps for defining your audience:

Use the information you have: Look at your current and past donors, pull up their data and take note of key identifiers such as age, location, occupation and their other interests. Look for patterns and then use this information to define your audiences.

Segment your audience: Identify different groups within your broader audience. These might include individual donors, corporate sponsors, volunteers, or beneficiaries. Each of these segments may use different search terms and have different online behaviours.

Understand motivations: Why does each group engage with your charity? Donors may be motivated by a personal connection to the cause, while volunteers might be drawn to the impact they can make. Understanding how your audience differs can help you to tailor your campaigns accordingly.

Research demographics and interests: Leverage tools like analytics, search console, social media insights, and your existing database to gather demographic information, interests, and behaviours of your existing audience. This data can help you define which keywords and content will best appeal to each segment.

By clearly defining who you want to reach, you can ensure your SEM campaigns target the right people with the right messages, ultimately leading to higher engagement and conversions.

ALIGNING SEM GOALS WITH YOUR CHARITY'S MISSION

One of the most important aspects of SEM for non-profits is ensuring that your campaigns are not only effective but also aligned with your organisation's core mission.

What are you trying to achieve? Is it a campaign to raise funds? Recruit volunteers? Without this alignment, your campaigns will fail.

Here at Logic+Magic, when working with non-profits we always follow a set process for aligning search goals with your mission:

Identify key actions: What specific outcomes are you aiming for with your SEM campaign? Whether it's raising awareness, increasing donations, driving event sign-ups, or recruiting volunteers, your SEM goals should directly support your mission.

Create mission-driven messaging: Ensure that your search ads, landing pages, and calls to action clearly communicate how user engagement will further your cause. Potential supporters should feel a personal connection to your mission from the very first click.

Always include a call-to-action: While raising awareness is critical, it's also important to drive measurable actions. For example, if your goal is to increase donations, your SEM campaign should not only raise awareness about your cause but also include strong calls to action that direct people to your donation page.

Track, report and adapt: Regular monitoring of your campaigns is the key to success. You must be able to adapt and optimise to ensure you are seeing results. Without this element of campaign management, you risk targeting outdated or irrelevant keywords, wasting ad spend, reducing overall visibility and missing key opportunities to reach your audience.

By tying your SEM strategy directly to your charity's mission, you can ensure that every click and conversion contributes to advancing your cause.



KEYWORD RESEARCH FOR CHARITIES

Keyword research is the backbone of any SEM campaign, but for non-profits and charities, it requires a slightly different approach. Without sounding like a broken record, your keyword strategy should also focus on aligning with terms that resonate with your audience and reflect your mission.

Keyword research can be a little tricky. It involves a fair bit of know-how and skill to strike the right balance between relevance, competition and search volume. We would always recommend working with a search expert to kick off your keyword research, but here are some tips to get you started:

Monitor and refine your keyword list regularly to ensure your SEM efforts remain aligned with both your audience's needs and your mission.

Trends may shift, and your keyword strategy should evolve with it. This is where working with a SEM expert is key to ensuring continued success.

Focus on cause-specific keywords:

Identify keywords that relate directly to your cause or the issues you're addressing. For example, a charity focused on environmental conservation might target keywords like **"Climate change action"** or **"Save the rainforest."**

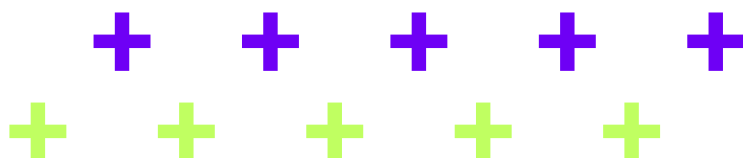
Leverage donor and supporter intent:

Think about what your supporters are searching for when they are ready to take action. Keywords like **"How to help refugees,"** **"Donate to animal shelters,"** or **"volunteer opportunities near me,"** can drive high-intent traffic.

Use long-tail keywords: Long-tail keywords (more specific, multi-word phrases) tend to have less competition and can attract more relevant traffic. For example, instead of targeting "charity donations," try **"charity donations for mental health"** or **"how to support women with PCOS."**

Include mission-aligned terms: Ensure that the keywords you target are aligned with your organisation's mission and messaging. For example, if your charity focuses on clean water for developing countries, your keyword strategy should prioritise terms related to geographical location, sanitation and health.

By defining your audience, aligning SEM goals with your mission, and conducting thoughtful keyword research, your non-profit can develop a more focused and effective SEM strategy that helps you reach the right people and achieve your mission-driven objectives.



BUILDING A STRONG WEBSITE FOUNDATION

The basis of a successful digital presence for any charity is a strong website. Having your own website, which is built to last and to your own specifications and needs, can help reduce reliance on external platforms for donations and generating awareness of your cause.

If you don't have a digital skill set in your charity, it can be difficult to know where to start. There are lots of free website builders that you can use, and lots of budding website developers who may be happy to volunteer in return for being able to develop their skill set and grow their portfolio.

If you already have a website in place, then fantastic, in this chapter we're sharing some tips to ensure your website has the best foundation to support its growth on search engines.

“

HAVING YOUR OWN WEBSITE CAN REDUCE YOUR RELIANCE ON EXTERNAL PLATFORMS FOR DONATIONS AND GENERATING AWARENESS”



THE IMPORTANCE OF WEBSITE ANALYTICS

Having analytics set up and tracking your performance as early as you're able to is crucial for several reasons:

Audience insights: Analytics will track how users are finding your website, what content they are most interested in and how they interact with that content. This means that you can tailor messaging and content to best resonate with your website users.

Performance measurement: All analytics platforms measure key performance metrics like website traffic, page views, time on site and referrals. You can also set up key goals that are important to track, for example, people who apply to become a volunteer, or who donates to your cause. This means that you can see trends – such as, if most of your donations are coming from users who are arriving from paid search, you know that you need to invest more time and energy into that channel. Or, if users are not interacting with a certain type of content – perhaps they don't spend long on your news articles – you know to spend less energy creating them.

Demonstrate impact: By tracking the performance of your website and online presence, you can demonstrate your impact to donors and potential sponsors. Showing statistics such as website traffic can help to build trust and credibility and give an idea to businesses of what kind of exposure they may get when partnering with your organisation.

Being able to see how your website is being used, your most popular pages and how people interact with your website, is important and many analytics tools are free.

Google Analytics 4 (GA4) tends to be the most popular, however other analytics platforms are available.



CREATING A CLEAR WEBSITE STRUCTURE

The structure of your website is very important for both your users and search engines. If either a search engine or website user (potential supporter of your charity) cannot find where they're going on your website, it's likely that they will leave and find it elsewhere.

For search engines, a good website structure helps to:

Improve crawl ability

This helps search engines to discover all your website content and add them to the index.

Understand content hierarchy

This helps with understanding how important each page is.

Support authority of content

Well-defined internal linking can help to distribute authority across your website pages and content.

For users, a good website structure helps to:

Provide a positive user experience

A sensible website structure is easier for users to navigate, find the information they need and in turn, convert.

Increase the time spent on the website

If your users can easily find the information that they need, they are likely to spend more time on your website to learn more about your cause.

Improve conversions

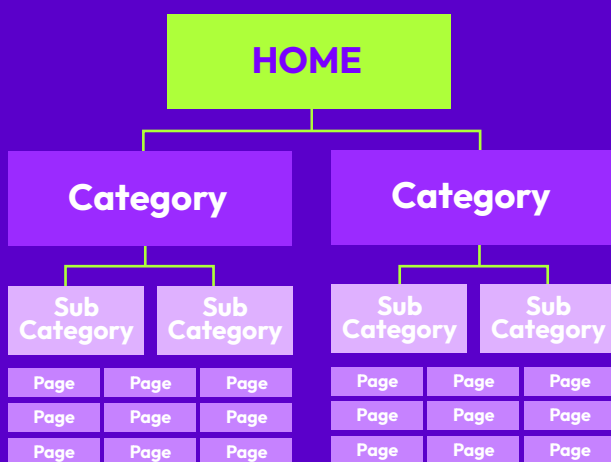
A well-structured website will help to guide users towards the desired conversions, such as becoming a volunteer or donating.



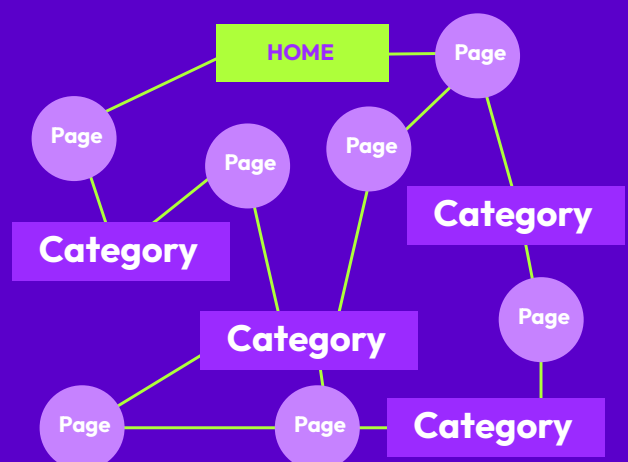
GOOD VS BAD WEBSITE STRUCTURE

If you think of a website like a supermarket, where each of the shelves are your content and the signage is your navigation. Someone who is unfamiliar with the supermarket will follow the signs to find what they want, and you might even put similar products together to help improve their experience. If the signs are unclear, or if the items on the shelves do not match the signs, then shoppers will become frustrated and leave, unlikely to return. This is a similar experience to users on your website. You want to carefully label your categories and place similar content together where it makes sense to do so.

GOOD website structure



BAD website structure

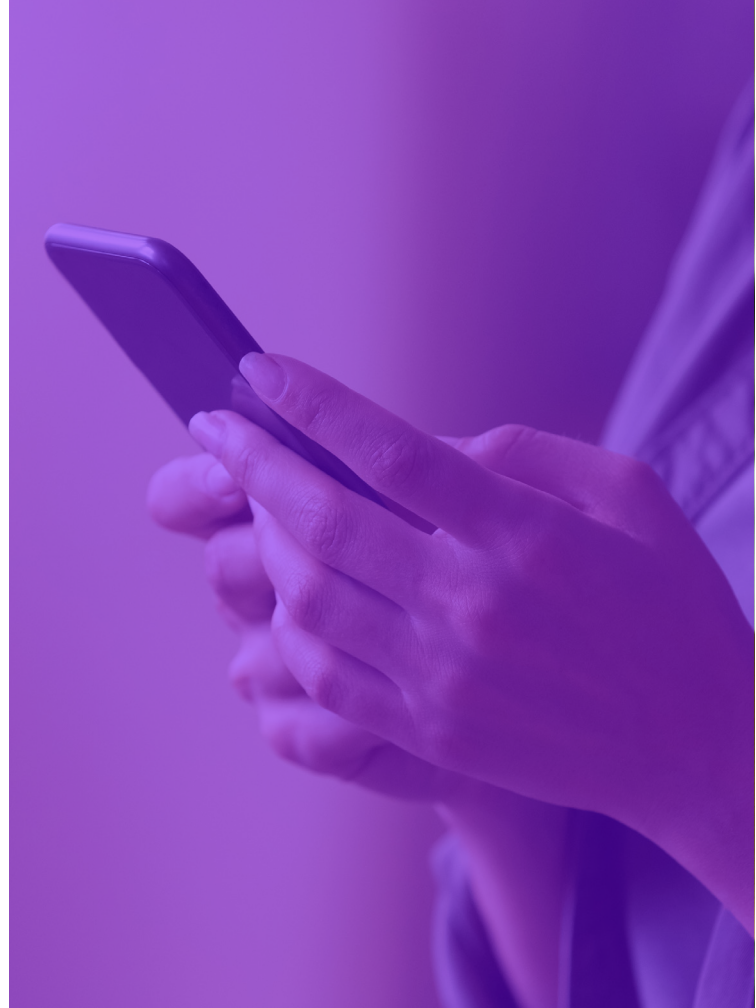


RESPONSIVE DESIGN

A responsive website is one that is designed to adapt to different screen sizes and resolutions. It means that all users can have the best possible experience on your website and that it always looks as it should whether on a desktop, a tablet or mobile device.

As a responsive website prioritises user experience by ensuring your content is easily accessible and will load quickly on the device, a responsive website can also support your SEO efforts.

Having a website that is easy to use and accessible for your audience whatever their needs, device and situation is incredibly important.



ACCORDING TO DATA, 51% OF PEOPLE WHO VISIT A NON-PROFIT'S WEBSITE DO SO USING A MOBILE DEVICE.

By having a website that is not mobile responsive you are likely making it difficult for 51% of your visitors to support your charity.

SUPPORT UNLOCKING YOUR FULL POTENTIAL

It might not seem important in the grand scheme of running your charity, but hopefully the points we've made here give some food for thought and outline why you could be missing out on vital support if your website is not built with a strong foundation.

If you don't have internal resource or web development knowledge it can feel like a mountain to climb. However, finding someone to give their time to support you with your website or applying for web support grants can make a world of difference in getting the all-important support that your charity deserves.

SEO + PPC: CREATING A STRONG SEM CAMPAIGN

Keyword research is the cornerstone of both SEO and PPC strategies.

By knowing what keywords and phrases people use to search for information related to your organisation, you can create relevant content and optimise your ad campaigns to be sure you are attracting the right audience. A lot of keyword research tools require a paid subscription, however below are some free ways to gather keywords relating to your cause:

Use Keyword Planner:

Within the AdWords platform, you will find Keyword Planner. This is a tool that allows you to discover keywords related to your cause and see how often they are being searched for.

Google search suggestions:

When you type into the search bar on Google, other related keywords are suggested. Also, at the bottom of every search engine results page is a list of related searches. These can give you an idea of what people are searching for and can be a great source of keyword ideas.

Free tools:

Where most keyword research tools require a subscription, there are some that are free to use or even some of the popular paid tools allow for some free searches. Answer the Public, Soovle and Ubersuggest are a few examples.



SEO: ENSURING ORGANIC SEARCH ENGINE FRIENDLINESS

THE BENEFITS OF SEO

Whilst the key benefit of SEO is of course growing the visibility of your charity and cause, it can have many other advantages:

Long-term: Although SEO is not an instant fix, and results can sometimes take time, the benefits of a high-quality SEO strategy can reap rewards long-term with on-going improvements to traffic.

More cost-effective than PPC:

Whilst optimising for SEO itself is not 'free' or 'cheap', the return on your investment is limitless – you are not restricted by budget when it comes to getting visitors to your website as clicks to your website are free.

SEO supports improved user experience:

The very nature of optimising a website for SEO involves creating a better experience for your users through improved content, better linking structures and technical improvements.



SEO achieves more clicks than PPC:

Whilst PPC adverts are positioned above organic listings on the results page, the average CTR (Click Through Rate) for organic listings across the board is higher for organic listings. The average CTR for the top organic listing is 39.8% however this drops significantly for the top paid advert, which has a CTR of just 2.1%.



THE CORE PRINCIPLES OF NON-PROFIT SEO

There are many factors to consider when it comes to optimising a website for organic search. Search engines use algorithms to determine how they are going to position results for a query, and the algorithms change frequently (potentially multiple times per day). There are believed to be over 200 different factors that are used to make this determination.

To make things more manageable, we're going to focus on four core principles that are important for your charity when it comes to improving SEO performance: website content, technical SEO, backlink building and local SEO.

TELLING YOUR STORY: WEBSITE CONTENT FOR CHARITIES

Content is a powerful tool for engaging your target audience, building awareness of your cause and driving support. By creating high-quality, optimised content for your website you can attract and retain supporters whilst improving your rankings on search engines.

Creating optimised website content

It can be quite time consuming knowing where to start with creating new content for your charity's website. Below are a few ideas to get you started with creating new search optimised content.

Use keyword research to define your content:

If there are multiple people searching for something, it's a good indicator that it is of interest to your target audience. If you have relevant experience and expertise in that area, deciding to write helpful content for your audience on the topic can be a good start.

Make your content readable:

Once you've written your great new piece of content, it's important to make it easily readable for both your users and search engines so they can easily tell what the topic of the content is. Organise your content into easily digestible paragraphs and separate with headings and subheadings. You can include keywords and queries within these headings to help improve search visibility.

Include links in your content:

Include links to other relevant pages on your website within your content, this can help improve website structure by showing the relationships between your content and give readers somewhere to go next. Including a link to your donation or support pages is a great idea.

OPTIMISING EXISTING WEBSITE CONTENT

If you already have a wealth of content on your website, then there is no need to reinvent the wheel. Optimising the content you already have is likely to be a crucial step in improving your charity's online visibility and impact, while saving you valuable time and resource costs. By refining existing content, you can attract more donors, volunteers, supporters and people in need of your support. Here are a few things to keep in mind when optimising existing content:

Define content to optimise:

- Look at your oldest content, is the information outdated or irrelevant? If so, update or delete!
- Analyse website traffic data. If certain pages aren't generating traffic, add them to the optimisation list!
- Additional detail can be added to weak content that lacks detail

Now you've decided what needs to be optimised, here are some things to look at and how to optimise the content:

- Seek expertise: was the content originally written by someone with expertise on the topic? If not and you now have someone within the organisation who has experience on the topic, ask them to re-look at the content
- Make the content more readable by breaking up the content with optimised headings and subheadings

- If you have multiple articles on one topic, combine them into one comprehensive piece of content
- Make sure all content has a strong call to action (donate or support is a good idea) and provide a link to direct readers to where they can take the action
- Update meta descriptions and titles to increase clicks from the search engine results page



TOP TIP

**WHEN OPTIMISING
EXISTING CONTENT,
ALSO LOOK AT
WHETHER ANY
LINKS TO OTHER
WEBSITES NEED
TO BE UPDATED**



TECHNICAL SEO

We've discussed previously the importance of having a strong website foundation, but even with the best laid groundwork, as websites grow, technical issues can creep in. Technical SEO is the on-going activity of making sure the foundation of the website stays strong.

Often technical SEO can be overlooked as it is not considered quite as exciting as content or digital PR, however it is a crucial component of a successful website and could be make or break in gaining awareness for your charity. A technically strong website helps to provide a good experience for users and ensures that search engines can efficiently understand your website's content.

Why technical SEO matters to your charity

Improved search engine rankings:

A technically sound website is more likely to rank higher in search engine results pages (SERPs), increasing organic traffic and awareness of your cause.

Enhanced user experience: A fast-loading, mobile-friendly website provides a positive user experience, encouraging visitors to stay longer and donate.

Increased conversions: A well-optimised website can lead to higher conversion rates, whether it's donations, volunteer sign-ups, or event registrations.

Cost-effective marketing: Technical SEO is a long-term, cost-effective strategy to attract organic traffic and generate leads.

Key technical SEO factors for charities

Website speed: Fast-loading pages improve user experience and search engine rankings.

Mobile-friendliness: Optimise your website for mobile devices to reach a wider audience and ensure your content looks flawless on any device.

Secure website: Use HTTPS to protect your website, user data and evoke trust.

XML Sitemap: Create an XML sitemap to help search engines discover and index your pages.

Robots.txt: Use a robots.txt file to control how search engines crawl your website.

Internal and external linking: Build a strong internal linking structure and acquire high-quality backlinks.

Schema markup: Use Schema markup to provide additional context to search engines.

For many factors of technical SEO, a developer will be required to action the updates, which can be another consideration and potential cost for your charity.



BUILDING BACKLINKS

Incoming links (backlinks) from other relevant websites are crucial to improve your non-profit website's visibility on search engines. Having backlinks from relevant external websites signal to search engines that your content is valuable and your website is trustworthy.

WHY BACKLINKS MATTER TO CHARITY WEBSITES

Increase your website's domain authority:

Backlinks from websites with authority can boost your own website authority, potentially making it more visible in search results.

Backlinks are a ranking factor: As we mentioned at the beginning of this chapter, there are many factors that search algorithms consider when determining website content rankings. Whilst we don't know the full list, we do know that backlinks are a key ranking factor.

Generate relevant referral traffic:

Backlinks will drive relevant traffic from other websites to your own.



HOW TO EFFECTIVELY GENERATE BACKLINKS

Write a guest post for a high-quality website within your charity's niche:

It has been discussed at length whether writing guest posts on other websites is still a viable link building tactic. If you choose a high quality, non-spammy website that is relevant to your charity, it can still be a great way to build a backlink whilst exposing your charity to potentially relevant supporters or people in need.

Outreach and relationship building:

Build relationships by reaching out to other relevant websites within your niche and find opportunities to be linked from their website.

Digital PR: Utilising PR (Public Relations) can be a great way to grow backlinks. It's likely that your charity has incredible data that can be used to generate newsworthy stories that would be of interest in the local area. Are you seeing an increase of people using your services? Are you in particular need of volunteers? Get in touch with local news outlets and journalists and see whether any of the data you have is of interest for them to write a story.

LOCAL SEO: CONNECTING WITH YOUR COMMUNITY

If your cause has a local aspect, perhaps you have a charity shop or you are an animal rescue who works within a set area, then local SEO is key for growing awareness and gaining support for your cause within your target area. Implementing local SEO strategies can help you to strengthen your presence in the local community, make a greater impact and attract more supporters.

What is local SEO?

Just as it sounds – local SEO is the activity of improving visibility of your organisation for locally targeted search terms.

For example:

“Charity shops near me” or
“Volunteer opportunities in Manchester”.

THERE ARE AN
AVERAGE OF
126,000 SEARCHES
PER MONTH FOR
QUERIES RELATING
TO ‘CHARITY NEAR
ME’ WITHIN THE UK.



STRATEGIES FOR GROWING LOCAL AWARENESS WITH SEO

Local keyword optimisation: Identify local relevant keywords that your audience may be searching for and incorporate these keywords into relevant content pages on your website. They can be used in titles, headings and in body content.

For example: **“Adopt a dog in Norfolk”** would be a relevant query for a dog rescue charity in Norfolk.

Create a Google Business Profile or Bing places for business listing:

This is particularly important if you have a physical presence as it will allow your organisation to be visible on online maps when people are looking in the area. Ensure you fill out all the relevant information you can, including contact details, available services, website address and opening hours.

Local digital PR and link building:

Inbound links from other quality websites are key for showcasing your websites authority in organic search, and it can also support your awareness locally. By sharing news relating to your cause with local news outlets and building relationships in your community, you can begin to build backlinks with a local focus to your website.

TOP TIP

YOU CAN ADD UPDATES TO YOUR LISTINGS, LIKE A SOCIAL MEDIA POST, THAT WILL BE VISIBLE ON YOUR PROFILE.



PPC (PAY-PER-CLICK): EFFECTIVE PAID SEARCH ADVERTISING

There are multiple versions of ‘pay-per-click’ when it comes to digital advertising, however in this section we are going to focus entirely on text-only ads that appear on the search engine results page (SERP). These ads are generally managed directly by the search engine that you’re using. For Google, ads are managed through AdWords, on Bing, it’s Microsoft Advertising, and on Yahoo, it’s Yahoo Partner Ads (YPA).

THE BENEFITS OF PPC

Results are almost immediate: This is where PPC has the edge on SEO. PPC campaigns can start to generate visibility and traffic almost immediately once campaigns and ads have been approved. This makes PPC useful for time-sensitive promotions such as events or seasonal fundraising.

Refined targeting: With PPC, you have greater targeting options as you can choose the ideal audience for your campaign to target, such as location, time of day and demographics. This means you can be sure your budget is being spent in the best way by only targeting the most relevant audience.

Easy to monitor results and return

on investment: Within PPC management platforms you have access to a wealth of data to help you track performance. Cost per click, number of impressions, clicks and conversions, are all automatically tracked for each campaign and keyword, so you can easily see what is generating the best return on investment. This is great for charities where you need to be confident that you’re spending your time and energy in the right places.

Competitive advantage: In many marketing channels, it can be difficult for organisations with smaller budgets to be seen alongside larger businesses and brands who have the budgets to match. PPC can level the playing field and allow your ads to appear alongside larger, more established, organisations.



GOOGLE AD GRANTS FOR NON- PROFITS

If you think that investing in PPC would be good for your non-profit organisation but are worried about funding your campaigns, the world's largest search engine, Google, have an initiative that can help.

Google Ad Grants provides eligible non-profits £7,000 worth of advertising spend per month for text only ads on Google search.

To be eligible, organisations in the UK and Ireland must:

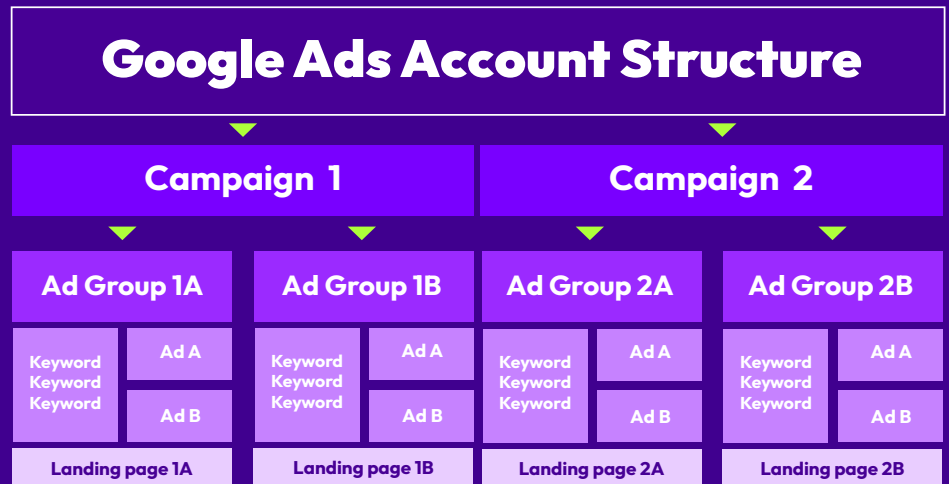
1. Be registered with the Charity Commission in England and Wales, the NICC in Northern Ireland, OSCR in Scotland or HMRC as a charitable tax-exempt charity or church.
2. Not be a government entity, a hospital or healthcare organisation, a school or academic institution.
3. Agree to additional terms of service for Google for Non-profits.
4. Be a verified non-profit organisation verified by Google for Non-profits' validation partner.

Once verified and accepted onto the program, you can create your AdWords account and take the next steps to creating your text search campaigns.



PPC COMPONENTS

Your AdWords account will be set up with campaigns, keywords and ad groups. Each campaign can have multiple ad groups, and ad groups can have many target keywords. Structuring your campaigns correctly is key for an effective campaign, however it's good to remember that the campaign structure is not set in stone and can easily be changed and updated.



Campaigns: You can have multiple campaigns within your account, with each campaign targeting a different demographic or specific topic. For example, you might have a campaign that is focused on fundraising, one to target people looking for the support you give, and another to target potential corporate sponsors.

Ad groups: Within each of your campaigns you can have multiple ad groups. Each ad group should be focused on a common theme. For example, within a fundraising campaign you may have multiple ad groups all focused on the different types of fundraising that you have; one for generating monetary donations, one for fundraising events and another for gifts in wills.

Keywords: Are what you want your ads to be visible for when someone searches for them. By choosing the right keywords for your ad groups and campaigns, you can be sure that you are best placed to reach the right people at the right time, minimising wasted spend.

Landing pages: Each of your ads will link to a page on your website where traffic will 'land'. These pages are important to the success of your PPC campaigns. Your landing pages should be relevant to your campaign and ads to provide a seamless user experience.

TOP TIP

MAKE SURE IT IS CLEAR FROM YOUR LANDING PAGE WHAT YOU WANT USERS TO DO AND MAKE IT EASY FOR THEM TO DO IT.

If you want them to donate, make sure there is an easy way for them to do it. If you want them to apply to volunteer, make sure there is a form on the page.

WRITING EFFECTIVE TEXT ADS FOR PPC

Creating effective ad copy is a crucial part of text PPC campaigns. With text ads on the search engine results page, you may only be competing against 3 other ads, but making sure that your ad is the most compelling will help you achieve that all important click to your charity's website.

You will have the option to write up to 10 headlines with 30 characters in each, and 4 descriptions, up to 90 characters. The ads platform will give you recommendations on what to include in your ad copy, however, here are some tips for writing ad copy that will make the searcher want to click your ad:

Clear and concise: Make sure your ad copy is easy to understand. You only have a set number of characters to play with, so the saying "don't say 20 words when you can say 2" has never been more important.

Include a strong call to action: Decide what you want searchers to do and include that in your ad copy. 'Donate now', 'become a volunteer' or 'join the movement' are all compelling calls to action you might want to use.

Use available ad extensions:

Within AdWords, you can create additional extensions to be used on your ads to add extra information, entice additional clicks to your website and it allows your organisation to take up more real estate on the page.

Use keywords in your headlines: Use the keywords that you are targeting within your headlines to improve the quality of your ads and improve your ad visibility in search results.



GENERATING ACTION: THE IMPORTANCE OF PPC LANDING PAGES

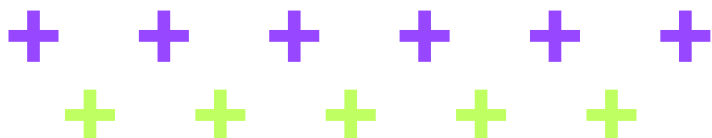
Landing pages are where users are going to visit after clicking on your ad on the search engine results page. A highly functional landing page is essential for converting your visitors into supporters and having them take the action you require. It's important that your landing page is relevant to the campaign and ad that your users have just clicked on to ensure a seamless user journey.

A highly performative landing page should include:

A clear headline: Make sure the title of your page is clear, aligns with the content on the page, as well as with the ad they have just clicked on.

Obvious call to action: Make it obvious what you want users to do when they arrive to the page and make it easy for them to take the action.

High-quality content: The content you include on a landing page should be concise and persuasive, using clear calls to action.



HOW TO MEASURE SEM PERFORMANCE

Measuring the impact of your search engine marketing activity is important. Especially in a non-profit where every penny counts. Having a good performance monitoring and reporting process in place helps you to know what is working, what isn't, and allows you to make decisions on where to focus time and resource in future.

There are many moving parts to measuring performance however, and if you don't have the know-how, it can be difficult to know where to start and how to tell what is working for your charity.

KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATORS (KPIs) TO MEASURE

Website traffic: How many sessions and pageviews are you getting from your PPC and SEO efforts? Most analytics software, such as GA4, will automatically measure performance by channel so you can see how much traffic is coming to your website and where from.

Conversions: this is a little trickier to set up, but tracking key conversions such as donations, volunteer registrations or requests for support is incredibly important.

By layering this information up with channel data, you will be able to tell which channel is giving you the most conversions. This can be a good indication of where to spend your time.

Keyword position: A higher position indicates that search engines deem that your content matches their algorithm and what the user is looking for. A higher position will usually mean increased visibility and more traffic.

Impressions: The total number of times your ad or listing has been displayed to users on search engine results pages. A higher number of impressions indicates a wider reach and potential exposure to your target audience.

Click through rate (CTR): Measures the percentage of people who click on your ad or listing after seeing it. A higher CTR is a great indicator that your listing is more effective in capturing user interest and driving traffic to your website.

TOP TIP

YOU CAN USE A FREE DASHBOARD TOOL SUCH AS LOOKER STUDIO TO CREATE AN EASY-TO-USE VISUALISATION ON SEARCH ENGINE PERFORMANCE.

USING DATA TO OPTIMISE YOUR SEM CAMPAIGNS

Once you've started to collect a good amount of data, you can use it to make informed decisions about how to optimise your campaigns so they can continue to improve. It can take a bit of experience to know how to use the data to make these decisions, but here are some ideas to get you started:

Identify keyword performance. Keywords that are driving a lot of traffic can be further optimised: For PPC campaigns, that might mean increasing the budget, whereas for SEO, it might mean increasing relevant website content around that keyword. For keywords in low positions, you might want to optimise the content completely with the aim of improving the rankings. For PPC, either pause them or reduce their spend.

Keep content updated: Use the data to define content that is not performing as well as others (isn't getting a lot of traffic or is not converting traffic that is arriving to the page) and ensure keywords are used throughout the page and that the information is up to date.

Create new content: If you are seeing that a page achieves a lot of traffic for a particular keyword, but you don't have any website content focused on that keyword, it can be a good technique to create new, high-quality content based on the topic to attract more traffic.

For PPC, identify ads with low click through rates but high numbers of conversions: Experiment with different ad copy, headlines and calls to action to try increase the traffic to the landing page.

Test and learn with your landing pages: If your campaigns are generating traffic but no conversions, it might be time to make some amendments to your landing pages. Test different landing page layouts, update your headlines and change your calls to action to see what might work better.



CASE STUDY: HOUSING RIGHTS

In the landscape of non-profit search engine marketing, effectively aligning digital strategy with organisational goals is crucial to reaching and engaging the right audiences. By strategically utilising SEM and other digital tools, charities can increase visibility, drive support, and maximise impact. One organisation that successfully navigated these challenges is Housing Rights, a charity dedicated to providing housing advice to Northern Ireland residents. Their story highlights how a targeted, integrated approach can transform a website upgrade into a powerful SEM asset, helping them better serve those who depend on their resources.

Our approach

Maintaining Housing Rights' search presence was crucial during the upgrade. Our SEO team worked closely with development and UX to align the new site architecture and page templates with SEO best practices, ensuring a smooth transition.

URL analysis and redirect mapping

We performed a detailed URL analysis to identify and redirect high-value pages, using both individual and pattern-based redirections to ensure users and search engines could still find essential content.

Long-term SEO foundation

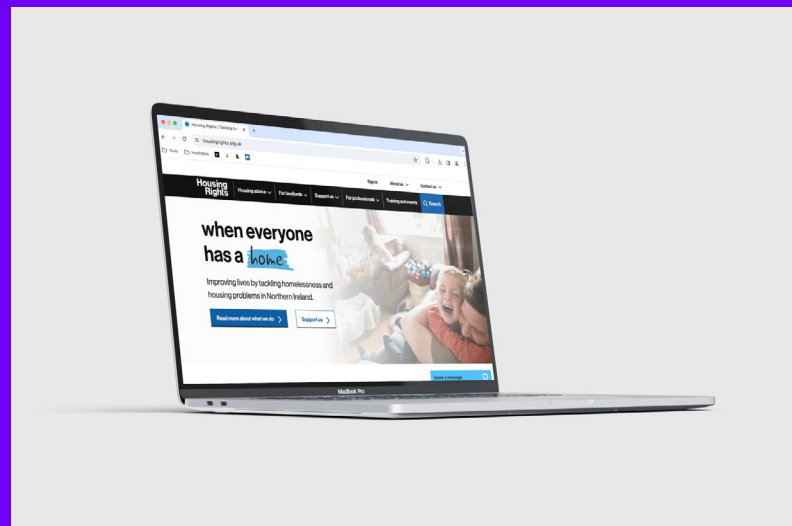
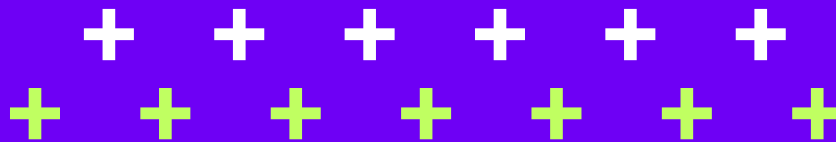
Page templates were built to support future SEO growth with clear metadata, structured headings, and logical content organisation. This foundation allows Housing Rights to build on its search visibility, helping them reach even more people in need of their services.

Client overview

Housing Rights is a registered charity in Northern Ireland that provides essential advice services for homeowners, landlords, and tenants. They faced the challenge of needing a significant website upgrade, transitioning their platform from Drupal 7 to Drupal 10, while also consolidating additional websites.

The challenge

With a wealth of information to manage, Housing Rights required a strategic SEM plan to safeguard visibility, maintain or boost website traffic, and ensure that users could locate information quickly.



CASE STUDY: HOUSING RIGHTS

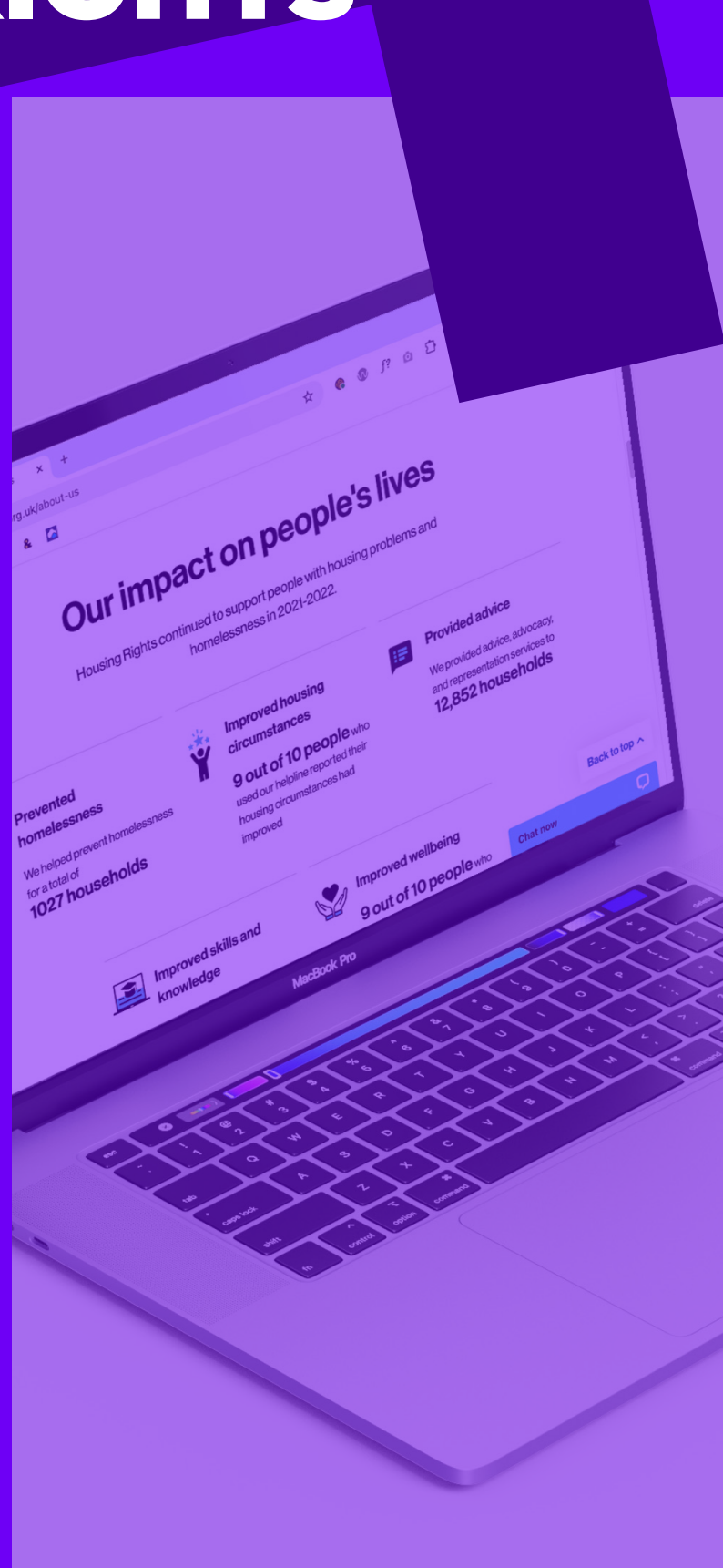


Results

The upgraded website allowed Housing Rights to continue delivering vital information to its audience seamlessly. The intuitive search functionality and carefully planned SEO measures ensured users could easily locate resources while boosting organic traffic.

Key takeaway

This project showcases the power of an integrated approach, blending development, UX, and SEM efforts to meet both the immediate and long-term needs of a non-profit. By prioritising content structure, enhancing site search, and securing SEO continuity, Housing Rights can now support its audience more effectively, fulfilling its mission to provide essential housing advice across Northern Ireland, while also preserving search visibility during platform migration.



SEARCH: OPPORTUNITIES FOR GOOD

Now that we've given you an overview of what SEM is and how you can leverage SEO and PPC to grow your non-profit, we hope you are feeling more confident in the opportunities it presents to your organisation.

The beauty of having a strong presence on search engines is the ability to expand your reach. Going beyond geographical boundaries and being able to reach individuals who genuinely care about your cause. Being found by people looking for you, exactly when they are in the headspace to support is vital in helping you to attract supporters, volunteers and donors.

Search engine marketing allows you to connect with those who need you most, but also who your organisation needs the most. From recruiting volunteers and trustees, to building awareness of your cause and becoming more visible for people looking for the support you provide, we hope that this guidance has helped you to understand the benefits that search engine marketing can have for you and your charity.

By implementing the strategies and ideas we've outlined, we hope to help you amplify your organisations impact, expand your reach and ultimately make a greater difference in the world.



GLOSSARY OF SEARCH ENGINE MARKETING TERMS

Ad group: a collection of related keywords and ads within a PPC campaign.

AdWords (Google Ads): Google's advertising platform that allows businesses to bid on keywords to display ads on Google's search engine results pages.

Click-through rate (CTR): the percentage of people who click on an ad after seeing it.

Conversion: a desired action taken by a user, such as donating, signing up for a newsletter, or purchasing a product.

Conversion rate: the percentage of website visitors who complete a desired action.

Cost per click (CPC): the amount of money an advertiser pays for each click on their ad.

Keyword: a word or phrase that people use to search for information online.

Keyword research: the process of identifying relevant keywords to target in your SEO and PPC campaigns.

Key performance indicator (KPI): statistics of measurement to define how well a campaign is performing.

Organic search: search engine results that are not paid for, but rather earned through SEO efforts.

Organic traffic: website traffic that comes from organic search results.

Pay-per-click (PPC): an advertising model where advertisers pay a fee each time their ad is clicked.

Return on investment (ROI): a measure of the profitability of an investment.

Search engine optimisation (SEO): the process of improving the visibility of a website in organic search engine results.

Search engine results page (SERP): the page displayed by a search engine in response to a user's query.

Search volume: the average number of searches per month made for a particular keyword.

Target audience: the specific group of people that a marketing campaign is aimed at.

Tracking: the process of monitoring the performance of a marketing campaign.

User experience (UX): the overall experience a user has when interacting with a website or app.

Website traffic: the number of visitors to a website.

SOURCES

Understanding your audience and mission

Charities Aid Foundation, 2024, How to Write Your Charity Mission Statement

The Charity Commission (GOV.UK), 2014, How to Write Charitable Purposes

Reis, Jeremy, 2022, 7 Steps to Define Your Nonprofit's Audience

Challenges

Ferrell-Schweppenstedde, Daniel, 2023, Key Challenges and Opportunities Facing the Charity Sector

Elliott, Sarah, 2024, The Road Ahead 2024: Opportunities and challenges for the voluntary sector

Grant Thornton, 2024, Charity Sector Developments

N-Compass, 2024, Navigating Challenges and Embracing Opportunities: The State of Charities in 2024

Elliott, Sarah, 2023, Meeting the challenges of a Cost of Giving Crisis this winter

Building a strong website foundation

Nonprofits Source 2023, Mobile Giving Statistics for Non-profits

SEO + PPC: Creating a strong SEM campaign

First page sage 2024, Google Click-Through Rates by Ranking Position



About the author

Leanne Dempsey

Head of SEM

leanne.dempsey@logicandmagic.agency

With over a decade of search engine marketing experience in a variety of industries including financial services, retail, travel and of course non-profit, Leanne is passionate about the value that search can bring to organisations. Aligning what search engines expect and what users are looking for is her expertise to help websites gain the most relevant traffic from search engines.

Logic+
Magic

About Logic+Magic

www.logicandmagic.agency

We believe in the power of diverse thought. A team of expert teams creating magic, unmatched by niche agencies.

Understand. Simplify. Wow. That's the process we follow in everything we do.

Our award-winning team is dedicated to simplifying the complex, crafting unforgettable experiences across a multitude of platforms. Whether it's through research and strategy, user experience design, or cutting-edge digital solutions, we're here to make the magic happen for you.

LET'S TALK

Darren Low

Managing Director

darren.low@logicandmagic.agency

0330 551 9390

OUR LOCATIONS



London

23 Goswell Road
Barbican
London
EC1M 7AJ



Belfast

19 Arthur Street
Belfast
BT1 4GA



Birmingham

Somerset House
37 Temple Street
Birmingham
B2 5DP



Carlisle

Suite 3
Telford House
Warwick Road
Carlisle
CA1 2BT