

# *SEO Checklist for 2021*

28 SEO Elements You Cannot Miss



ALPHA

# ***WHAT IS SEO***

SEO stands for Search Engine Optimization. It is the process of achieving better rankings and increasing the quantity and quality of traffic to your website through organic search engine results.

SEO helps to make your website more visible to potential customers who are searching for your products, brand and services. At the same time, you are also creating a better user experience. In fact, 51% of all website traffic comes from organic search\*.

# ***WHAT MAKES A GOOD SEO***

SEO is comprised of a long list of factors including domain authority, on-page elements, site-level elements and website health, off-page elements, user interactions, special Google algorithm rules, brand's digital presence and more.

While these factors work together to determine a website's organic presence, the following provides a list of foundational SEO elements marketers and webmasters can focus on.

\*According to a study by BrightEdge on billion content pieces, 51% of all website traffic comes from organic search.



# ***BASIC SETUP FOR NEWBIES***

- #1 Set up and connect to Google Analytics
- #2 Set up and connect to Google Search Console
- #3 Go through a website health check
- #6 Create XML sitemap
- #5 Create robots.txt file
- #7 Do keyword research

# #1

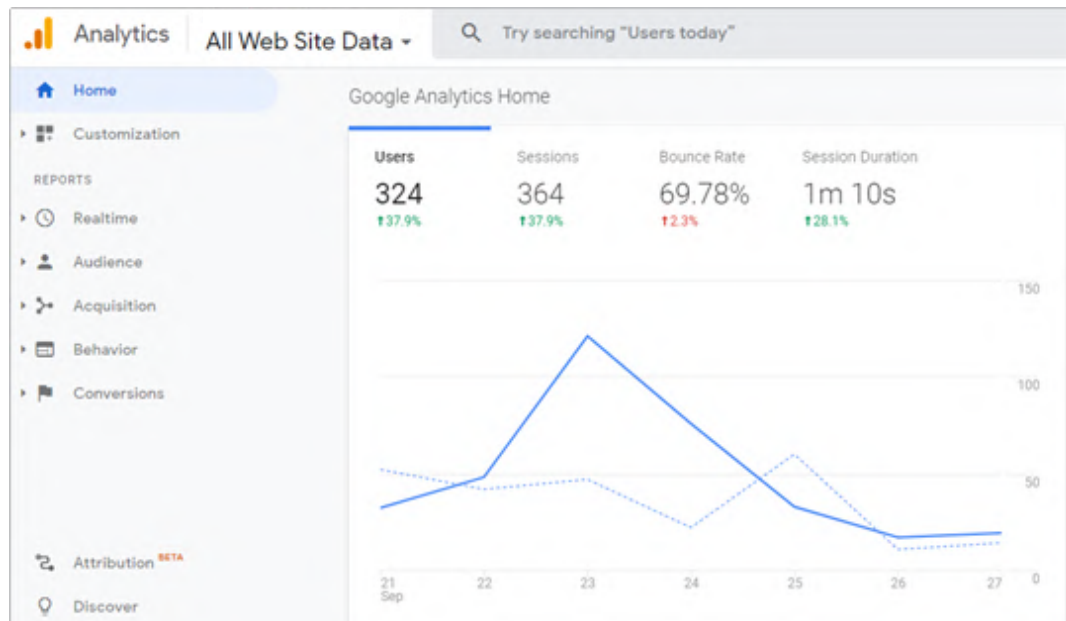
## Set up and connect to Google Analytics

Google Analytics is a free website analytics tool from Google that tracks and reports website traffic. Tracking includes various website activities such as pageviews, number of visitors, session duration, pages per session, bounce rate of visitors, along with the website traffic source.

To install for your website, sign up and you will be provided a tracking code to paste into your website.



**Helpful resource:** This video is helpful to guide you through the setup: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mXcQ7rVn3ro>



Website traffic monitoring by Google Analytics

# #2

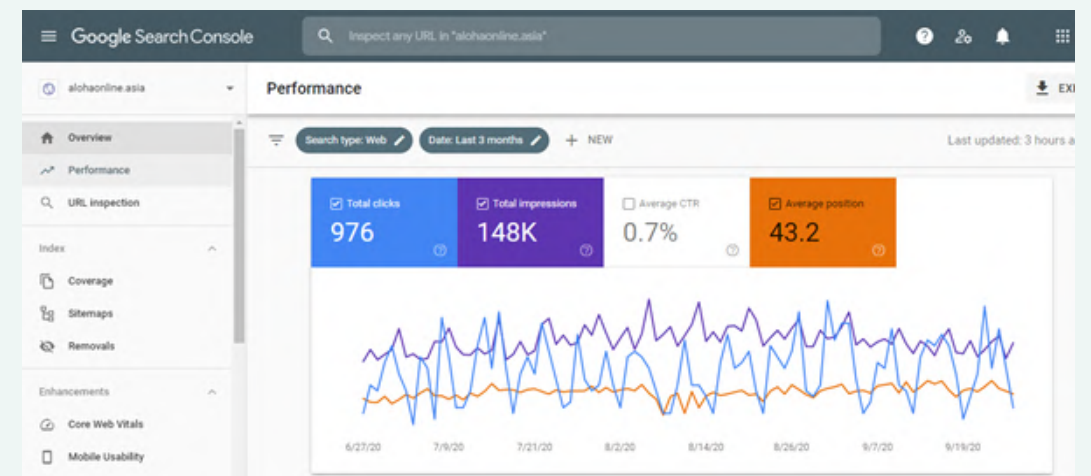
## Set up and connect to Google Search Console

Google Search Console is another free tool from Google. It provides key metrics about your site's organic search performance including impressions, clicks and rankings. It also tells you what keywords your website ranks for. Google Search Console also provides information on on-site improvements you can make.

To connect your website to Google Search Console, simply go to <https://search.google.com/search-console/about> and follow the steps to set up and verify your website ownership.



**Helpful resource:** Watch this video which guides you through the setup: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=N4PmE3LysUM>



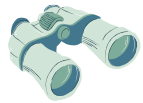
Monitoring your website organic performance from Google Search Console

# #3

## Go through a website health check

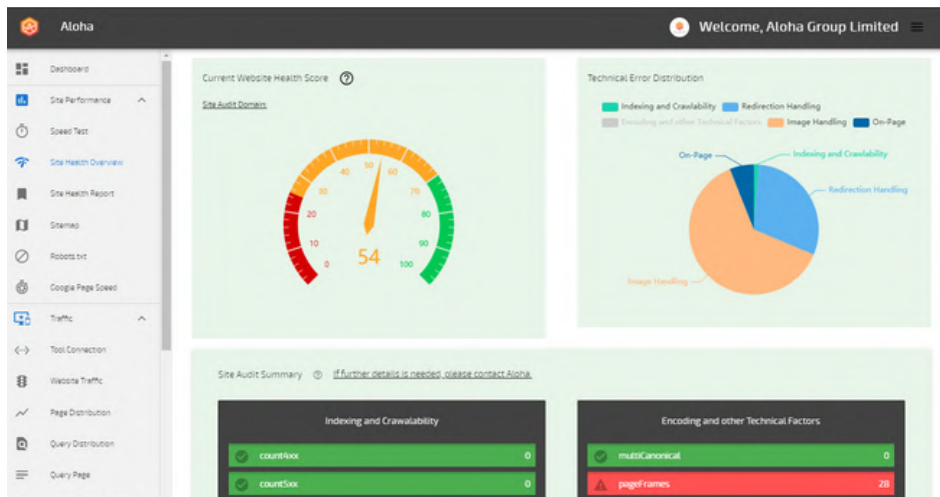
To kick start the SEO enhancement plan, it is important to know your existing organic search performance and check if there are any website errors.

Conduct a website audit to get a full picture of your website’s SEO potentials – where you are at, and how much more can be optimized.



**Helpful tool:** [Site Health Enhancer \(S.H.E.\)](#) provides you a free health check with an SEO score. The report provides a framework of your website’s existing errors and missing SEO elements.

To check on technical and page elements, you can leverage [Quanery](#) to conduct a thorough and comprehensive site audit.



Thorough site audit report on Quanery

# #4

## Make your site more accessible with sitemap.xml file

An XML sitemap contains a list of all URLs and meta data on the website and serves as a blueprint to help Google bot to crawl the website and review corresponding URLs efficiently.

Create a sitemap and submit it to Google Search Console. Note that there is no guarantee that all webpages in the sitemap will be crawled and indexed immediately, as it depends on the search engine.



**Helpful tools:** [Quanery](#) provides sitemap solutions to help you generate sitemap in simple steps. There are also some online tools or CMS plugins that you can use to create a sitemap.

Website	Current Status	Submit Time	Completed Time	Number of Pages	Download Now
https://www.alohaonline.asia/	FINISHED	2020-09-23 16:05	2020-09-23 16:05	76	

Sitemap solutions provided by Quanery

## #5

# Tell search engine what to and not to crawl by creating a robots.txt file

Robots.txt is a plain text file that tells search engines where they can and cannot crawl on your site. If you need to disable some of your webpages from being searchable on Google, you can specify in your robots.txt file. For example, you would prevent “thank you” pages from users’ searches.

```
Your exist robots.txt :
User-agent:*
Disallow: /thank-you-for-signing-up-for-membership/
```

*Example of robots.txt*

Go through your sitemap and make a list of webpages you do not want users to find them on search engines. Then block the paths using a robots.txt file.



**Helpful tools:** In Aloha [Quanery](#) platform, you can generate robots.txt from the existing website. Then they can easily edit and conduct tests to check whether the robots.txt file is running properly.

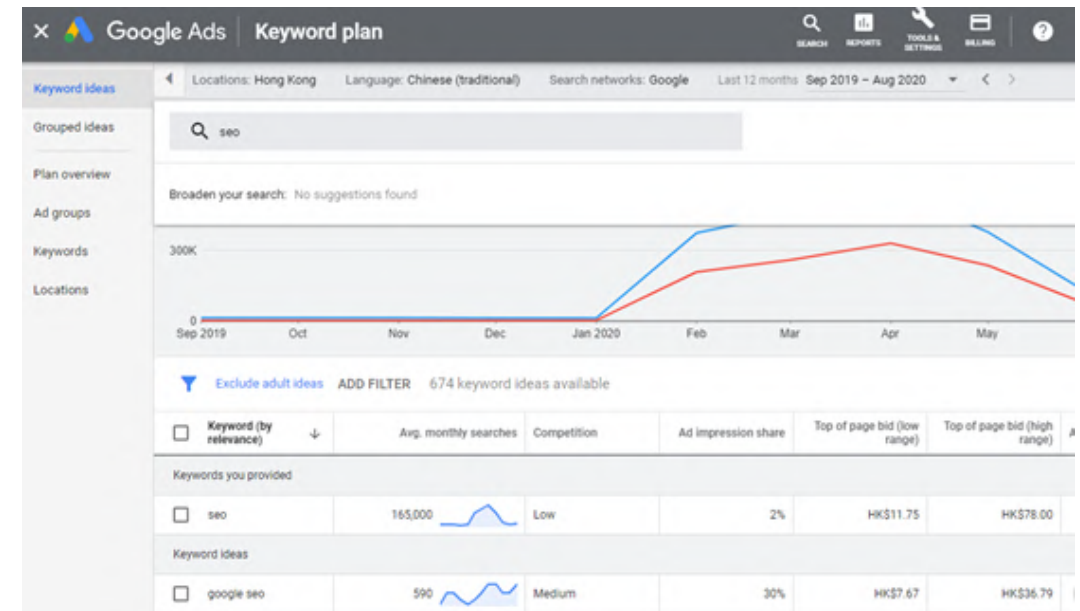
## #6

# Keyword research

By conducting keyword research, you can identify what keywords your target audience use when they are looking for a particular product or service. You can also understand what kinds of content users are looking for on any given topic. The insights will be helpful in your website content plan.



**Helpful tools:** [Google Trends](#), [Google Keyword Planner](#) or [Ubersuggest](#) are helpful tools for you to check the search volume for a topic, and get a list of relevant search terms so you can understand more about user search intent.

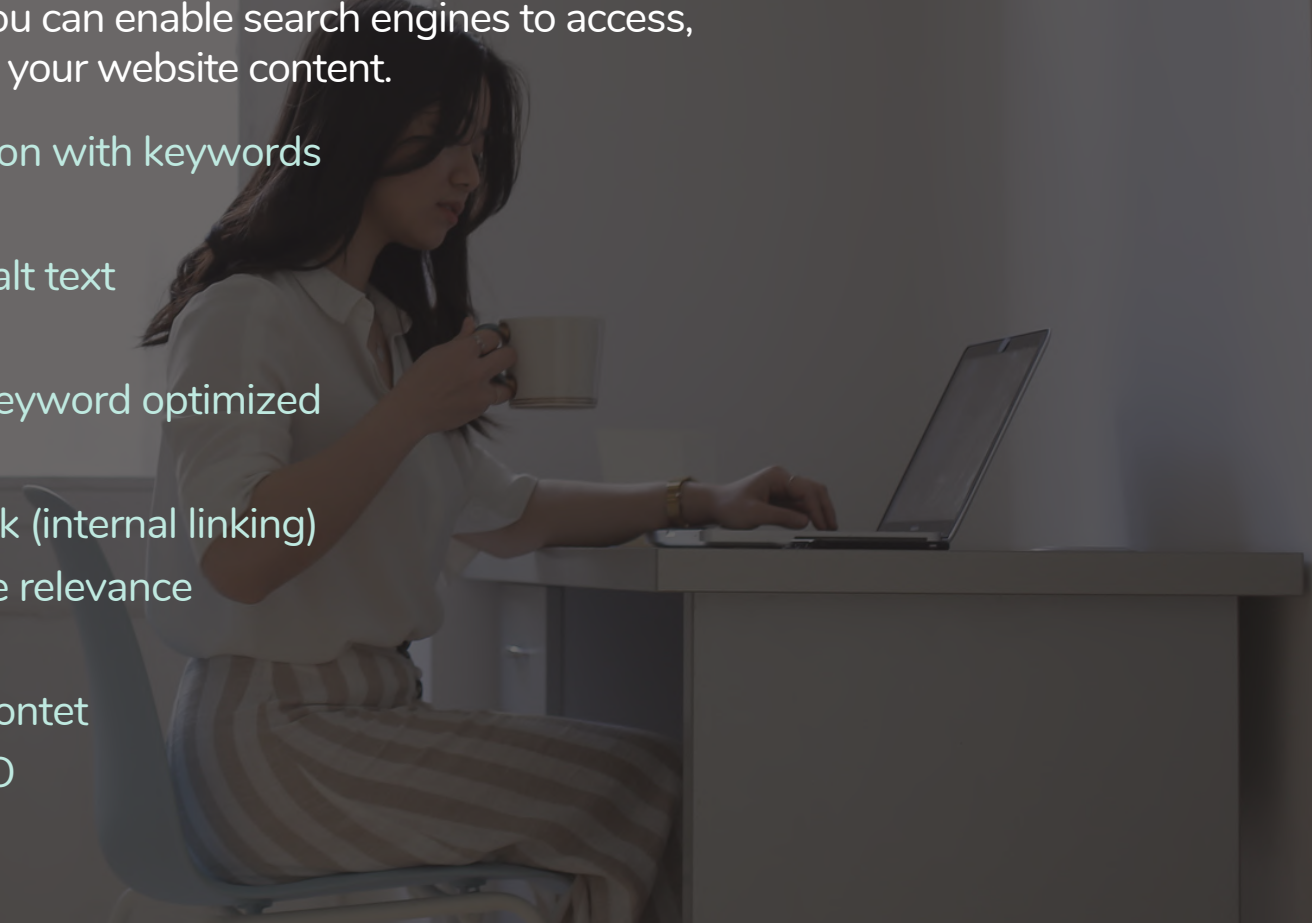


*Researching on “SEO” related keywords on Google Keyword Planner*



# ON-PAGE ELEMENTS

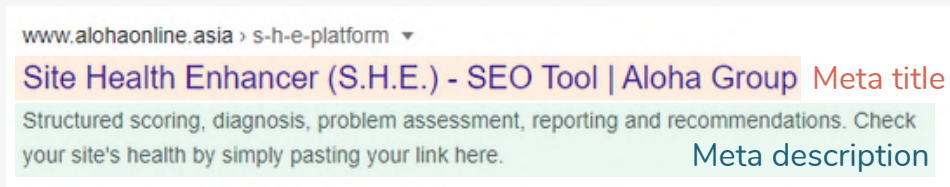
On-page SEO covers all the modifications that are made on your individual webpages. By fixing these elements, you can enable search engines to access, comprehend and rank your website content.

- #7 Optimize meta title, meta description with keywords
  - #8 Optimize H1 tag
  - #9 Optimize images with descriptive alt text
  - #10 Implement structured data
  - #11 Keep URL short, descriptive and keyword optimized
  - #12 Standardize URL structure
  - #13 Link pages internally with hyperlink (internal linking)
  - #14 User anchor texts to increase page relevance
  - #15 Check duplicate content
  - #16 Apply canonical tag for duplicate content
  - #17 Apply hreflang tag for regional SEO
- 

## #7

# Optimize meta title, meta description with keywords

Your meta title and description are the first things users see about you from the Google search results page.



Search result with meta title and description

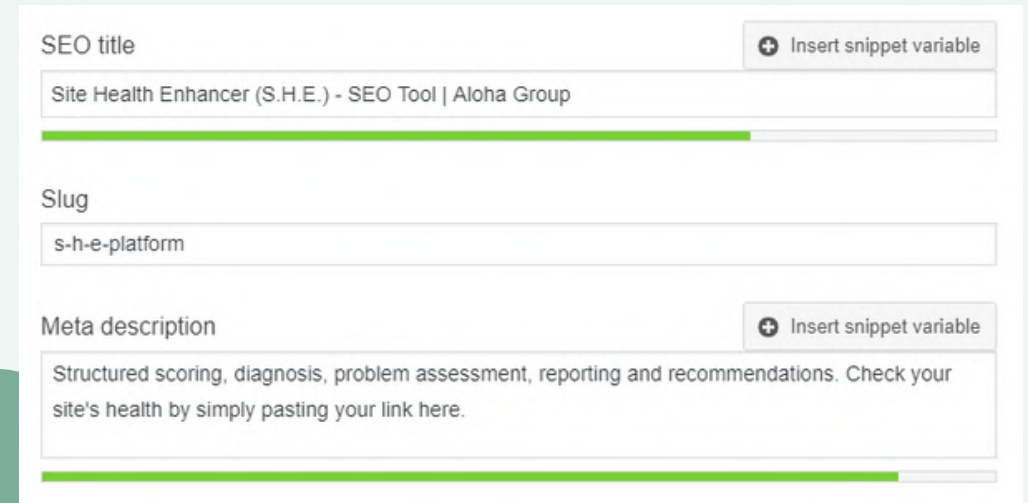
You should keep your title short and precise. Optimize its length with keywords.

Your meta description needs to appeal to your audience. It should be a well-crafted promotional text that is accurate about your page content. Include a call-to-action text to attract users to click into your site.



**Helpful tools:** [Quanery's](#) site health check function helps generate a csv spreadsheet of all your existing meta titles and descriptions. This helps you keep a record of title and description of all your existing webpages. You can check them systematically, also spot out easily in case any meta title and description are missing.

Yoast SEO is a free plugin for WordPress CMS. Marketers can use it to run checks on webpage to see if the title and description are optimized with the keyword.

A screenshot of the Yoast SEO meta title and meta description editing interface. The 'SEO title' field contains 'Site Health Enhancer (S.H.E.) - SEO Tool | Aloha Group' and has a green progress bar below it. The 'Meta description' field contains 'Structured scoring, diagnosis, problem assessment, reporting and recommendations. Check your site's health by simply pasting your link here.' and also has a green progress bar below it. Both fields have an 'Insert snippet variable' button to the right.

With Yoast SEO, green bars under meta title and description editing function indicate the title and description are well optimized.

## #8

# Optimize H1 tag

H1 tag is an important on-page element as it serves as a good indicator for search engine to understand the context of the webpage.

You should mark only one clear H1 tag on each page of your website. Make sure your H1 includes keywords and describes accurately the key point of your page.



**Helpful tool:** You can use [Quanery's](#) site health check to generate a report in csv spreadsheet to spot out which page lacks its H1 tag. You can easily identify the webpages that lack H1 tags, and go directly to them in your CMS to fix them.



## #9

# Optimize images with descriptive alt text

Alt text is helpful for ranking in Google Images as it provides textual support for search engine to fully interpret what your images are about. In case when an image fails to load, its alt text tells readers what the image is about.

Below is an example of a descriptive alt text for an image of a vintage laptop case made with leather. If you are using a CMS, you usually find the alt text field available next to your image upload.

```

```

*Example of alt text in html for an image*

Uploaded on: September 24, 2020  
File size: 304 KB  
Dimensions: 853 by 310 pixels

Alternative Text

*Editable alt text field in Wordpress CMS*

Go through your website to check if you have already added alt text to all images. If not, do make sure you add them in place. If yes, check if they include keywords and precisely describe what the image illustrates.



**Helpful tool:** Using [Quanery's](#) site health check, you can check where alt text is missing for your website images. You can easily identify the images and go directly to them in your CMS to amend the alt texts.

## #10

# Implement structured data

Structured data, also called schema markup, is a type of code that helps search engines better understand and display your website content as rich snippets.

A website with structured data in place will have a more organized search result appearance, based on the type of structured data is applied. By improving the appearance of search results, structured data can improve click-through-rate and generate greater traffic to your website. You can apply structured data suitable for your website content and business nature. The most common structured data types are:

- ["How to" markup](#)
- [Product type markup](#)
- [Reviews markup](#)
- [Software markup](#)
- [FAQ markup](#)

www.target.com > Electronics > Headphones ▾

### Apple AirPods With Charging Case : Target

The new **AirPods** combine intelligent design with breakthrough technology and crystal clear sound. Powered by the new Apple H1 headphone chip, **AirPods** ...  
★★★★★ Rating: 4.7 · 787 reviews · US\$129.99 · In stock

*Search result of webpage with product type structured data applied*

www.hktvmall.com > hktv > search\_a > keyword=Airpods

### Airpods | HKTvmall Online Shopping

Wireless Charge - 3-In-1 Multi-function Wireless Fast Charging Stand for iPhone/Android Mobile, Apple Watch, **Airpods** (Model:Q12) (Hong Kong Warranty ...

*Search result of webpage without structured data applied*



**Helpful resource:** For more information on how to apply the markups, you can go through the details in Google's guidelines. Alternatively, you could consult with SEO agencies to make sure structured data are properly applied.

# #11

## Keep URL short, descriptive and keyword optimized

Although URL length has no direct impact on a site's ranking, a research by ahref studying over 2 million URLs reflects a correlation where websites with shorter URLs tends to rank better.

A short and descriptive URL creates a better user experience as it is easier to read, remember and share. Make sure you include relevant keywords in your URLs as this will help search engine read and determine relevancy of the page.

For example, a short URL as shown below can be displayed completely in Google's search result. This helps users quickly understand what information they can find on the webpage.

[www.alohaonline.asia](https://www.alohaonline.asia) > quanery

### Quanery SEO Platform - Aloha Group HK

Aloha Quanery, a game-changing SEO tool launched in 2018, provides marketers and webmasters a comprehensive and accurate view of website traffic by ...

*A short URL is able to be displayed completed in search result*

# #12

## Standardize URL structure

Besides having keywords in your URLs, it is also important to keep a uniform URL structure. This helps both search engine and users understand the website structure and content better.

You can structure your URLs like below:

<https://www.domain.com/folder/productname>

# #13

## Link pages internally with hyperlink (internal linking)

It is important to link your webpages internally. When you publish something new, make sure you add a link to connect it with other relevant pages. This helps Google bots crawl and index your website systematically.

A page on your website that is not linked to any other pages is referred to as "orphan pages". An orphan page results in bad SEO because search engines assume that a page with no internal links from its own website has no importance. Also, PageRank could not be transferred when there are no internal links.

The existence of orphan pages even have a negative effect on SEO of your entire website. It is essential to make sure you identify any orphan pages and link them to other relevant pages.

# #14

## Use anchor texts to increase page relevance

Anchor texts are the visible texts in your content that hyperlink to another webpage. They describe the link in detail and allow readers to click on keywords to be redirected to relevant page content.

When more pages use the same keyword to direct to a specific page, it gives search engine more signals indicating the landing page should be very relevant for this keyword.

So, try using descriptive anchor texts containing relevant keywords instead of generic “click here” and “learn more”.

Later this year, Google will be rolling out lead form extensions to display ads as well. As a premier partner of Google, our SEM agency team looks forward to leveraging this feature across channels to unleash digital advertising potentials for our clients.

Have questions regarding digital marketing? Talk to us today.

*Example of anchor texts in a webpage*



# #15

## Check duplicate content

Duplicate content refers to the exact same content appearing on the website in more than one place. Sometimes the same content appears under different URLs. In some cases, the same title appears with different content. This makes it difficult for search engines to determine the best search result among the different URLs and can negatively impact rankings.

Therefore, check if there are any unnecessary duplicated pages on your site and fix the errors as soon as possible. If multiple versions are found, use 301 redirects to redirect users to the desired version.

When multiple pages with ranking potentials are combined into one page, the pages stop competing with one another and creates stronger relevancy. The combined page also gains stronger traffic.



## #16

### Apply canonical tag for duplicate content

If your website has duplicated content that is necessary to coexist, you can handle them with canonical tags. (If the duplicated content is unnecessary, 301 redirect should be an easier and cleaner way to resolve the issue as discussed in point 15.)

Canonical Tags provides a signal for search engines to determine the preferred version of a webpage to be indexed. For example, there are two identical web pages A & B with different URLs - [www.domain.com/a](http://www.domain.com/a) and [www.domain.com/b](http://www.domain.com/b). Version A is the original version, while version B is the second version.

On the head section of webpage B, the following canonical tags will be implemented to refer to the original webpage A. This tells Google that the webpage A is to be indexed, while webpage B will still be crawled:

```
<link rel="canonical" href="https://www.domain.com/a"/>
```

Example of a canonical tag



## #17

### Apply hreflang tag for regional SEO

Hreflang is an html tag that helps Google to serve the content in the right language that fits the users' preferences in the search results. When your website serves multiple regions with different languages, the hreflang attribute tells Google which language you are using on a specific page, so the search engine can serve it to users searching in that language.

```
link rel="alternate" href="https://domain.com" hreflang="en-us" />
```

Example of how an hreflang tag looks like



#### Helpful resource:

You can go through Google's recommendations for [more guidelines on implementing your language tags](#).



# TECHNICAL ELEMENTS

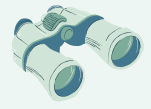
Technical SEO is the process of ensuring that a website meets the technical requirements of search engines for better organic rankings. Important elements of technical SEO include crawling, indexing, rendering, and website architecture.

- #18 Improve page speed
- #19 Make sure site is crawlable by search engines
- #20 View rendered source
- #21 Identify and rectify broken links
- #22 Adapt to mobile devices
- #23 Enable https

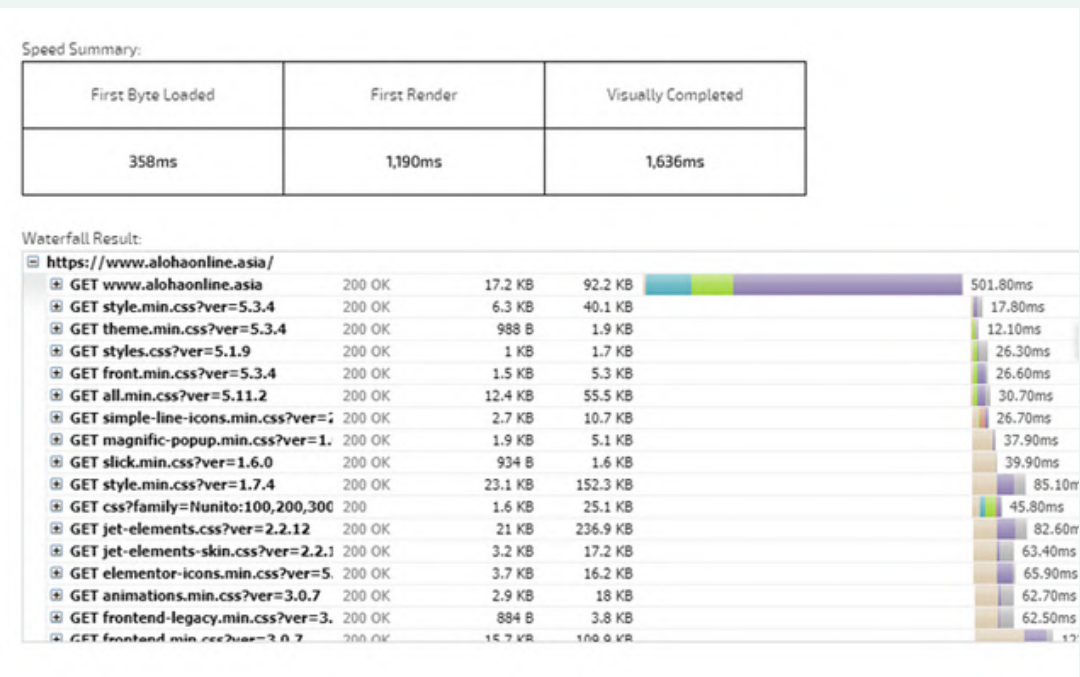
# #18

## Improve page speed

According to Google, page speed has been a ranking factor on desktop since 2010 and on mobile since 2018. A faster page speed means a shorter page loading time. It attributes to better user experience with a decreased bounce rate.



**Helpful tool:** You can use [Google's PageSpeed Insights](#) to check your page speed. To gain more information on technical items that affected your page speed, you can go through a comprehensive page speed test on [Quanery](#). The result features a waterfall diagram to indicate the loading speed of various items on your webpage.

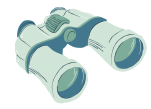


Page speed tests report with waterfall diagram from Quanery

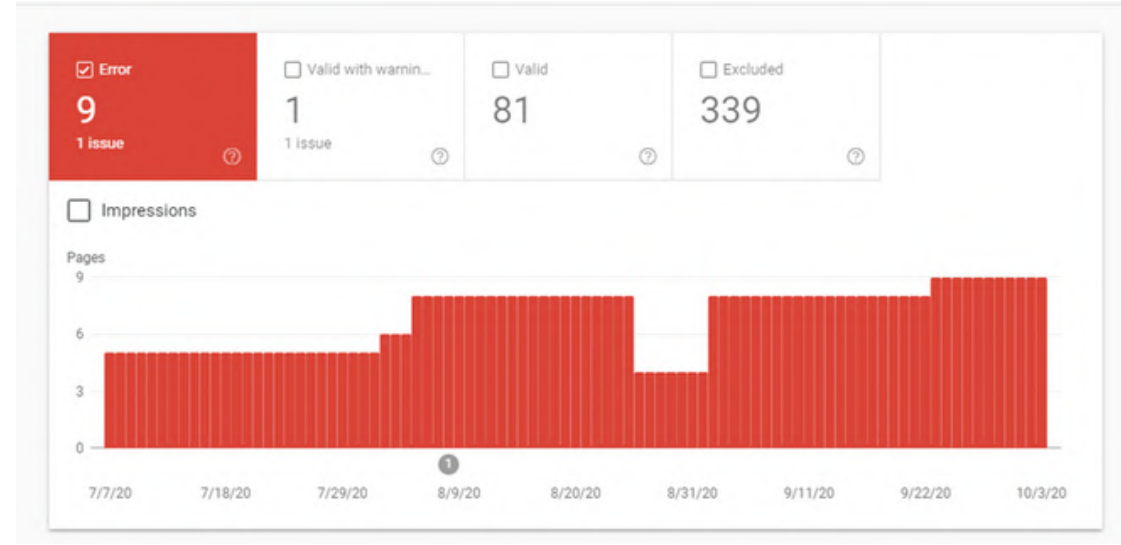
# #19

## Make sure site is crawlable by search engines

In order for a site to rank on Google, we need to make sure its content can be accessed by Google bot (i.e. crawled). If a page is unable to be crawled and indexed in the first place, any SEO efforts to improve the webpage ranking will be in vain. So, it is crucial to identify as soon as possible if there are any crawling errors on your site.



**Helpful tool:** You can find your crawl errors in [Google Search Console's Coverage](#) tab.



Crawl errors identified by Google Search Console

## #20

### View rendered source

It is important to review the rendered html to make sure Google can read your page content properly so that all your content is showing up as intended, especially when your website uses JavaScript to publish content.



**Helpful tool:** You can install a Chrome plugin called [View Rendered Source](#) which enables you to view both the static html and the rendered html side by side. It even helps highlight the differences line by line so you can compare at ease.

```
Copy Copy
Rendered as: Chrome, Desktop
</script>
<script id="walkme-config-constants" type="text/javascript"
src="chrome-extension://iffnipbkkbgfeffippbaldmgdpealdd/config/consts.js">
</script>
<script id="walkme-errors-logger" type="text/javascript"
src="chrome-extension://iffnipbkkbgfeffippbaldmgdpealdd/errorsLoggers/errorsLogger.js"
></script>
</head>
<body>
<header>
<div class="inner">
<div class="logo">
<h1> FromScratch</h1>
<h2>Auto-saving scratchpad</h2>
</div> <a
href="https://github.com/Kilian/fromscratch/releases/download/v1.4.1/FromSc
ratch.Setup.1.4.1.exe" class="button">Free download for <b>Windows</b></a>
<br> <small><a href="#download" class="small">not your platform?</a>
</small> </div>
</header>
<section class="intro">
<div class="inner">
<div class="half">
<h2>A simple but smart note-taking app</h2>
<p>FromScratch is a little app that you can use as a
```

Using View Rendered Source plugin, you can spot the highlighted differences easily

## #21

### Identify and rectify broken links

Broken links create a poor user experience and cause potential loss in website traffic. Broken links often occur when the destination URLs have been changed or inserted incorrectly. An error code 404 is shown in the browser.

Make sure you check if there are any broken links on your website regularly. You can check by going through your navigation menu and internal links.

## #22

### Adapt to mobile devices

With more and more users searching on mobile devices, it is important to have a mobile-friendly website. In fact, Google emphasizes a lot on mobile user experience that it has fully rolled out a [mobile-first indexing](#) in September 2020.

To check if your website works well on mobile, you can test with [Google mobile-friendly test tool](#). Whenever a new page is designed, make sure you preview the layout with all desktop, mobile and tablet preview modes.

## #23

### Enable https

A website URL could start with http or https, depending on whether the domain has acquired any security certificate.

Https is a confirmed ranking signal as security is a top priority for Google. If your website is still with http, get a certificate for your domain from a reliable certificate authority to enable and migrate your website to https.

# OFF-PAGE ELEMENTS

Off-page SEO is the process to improve your website's reputation and authority. This depends mainly on inbound links and traffic.

- #24 Create backlinks (link building)
- #25 Promote your content with social media campaigns
- #26 Insert social plugins
- #27 Improve local SEO - Google My Business
- #28 Avoid black hat SEO



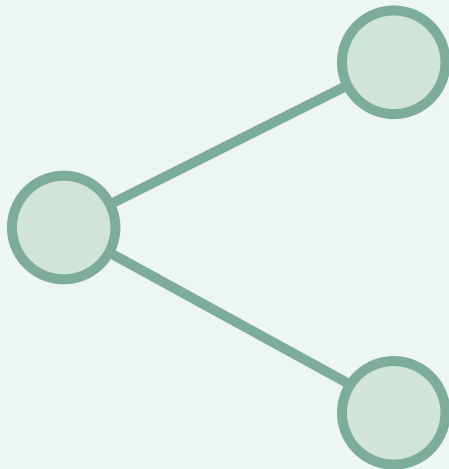
# #24

## Create backlinks (link building)

Backlinks are inbound links created from other external websites. In one of the Google's ranking algorithms, a formula called "PageRank" is used to determine the value of a page based on the quantity and quality of third party pages linking to it. In other words, the more backlinks your website have, the higher PageRank (or domain authority) you will gain.

An important point to note is that building natural links is key to Google's current algorithm so avoid black hat methods like building links with content farms. To ensure your links are natural, you can build backlinks by creating guest posts in quality websites, including creditable media websites.

You can also create your business profile on directory listings websites. Another method is to make use of potential business partnerships with government related official websites and global organizations and build links that are fitted to your business need.



# #25

## Promote your content with social media

Social network plays a significant role in web use. Website traffic generated from social network creates signals for Google that the website provides relevant and quality content. Moreover, when your website gains more social exposure, it could generate more organic search about the brand from which Google will recognize the brand's popularity.

Make sure to leverage social media to promote your content and post regularly to generate traffic for your website.

# #26

## Insert social plugins

Social plugins refer to social media sharing buttons and commenting boxes inserted into your website. The buttons can encourage users to share your content on social networks and help expand your reach. At the same time, it helps with your SEO as sharing creates more backlinks and generate more traffic back to your website.

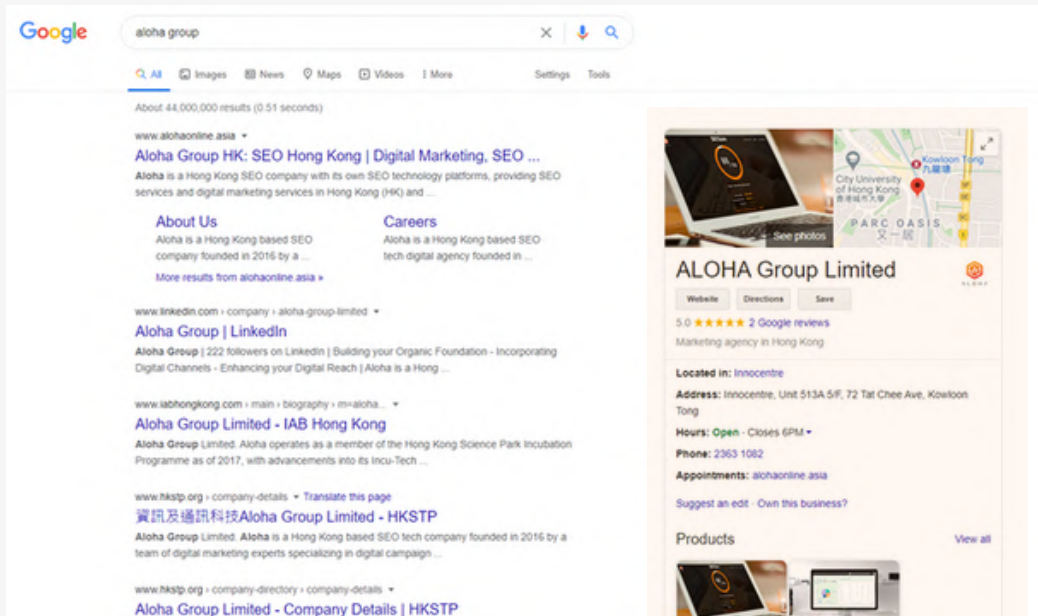


# #27

## Improve local SEO - Google My Business

Google My Business is far more than just a business listing. It helps improve your local ranking and visibility. When users search for a business or a place near their location, Google shows local results via Google Maps and Search. You can optimize search results with the business profile information you provided in Google My Business.

Create your [Google My Business](#) profile by going through a couple of business claims and verification steps. Then, you can manage how your business profile looks by adding updated business details like opening hours, brand photos and latest offers. Furthermore, you can also manage the reviews your customers leave for you.



Example of a Google My Business profile

# #28

## Avoid black hat SEO

Black hat SEO is a practice used to get a site ranking higher in search results, but against search engine guidelines. Rather than addressing users' intent, black hat SEO tactics seek to game search engine algorithms. This could end up with a penalty from search engines damaging your presence instead.

Black hat techniques to avoid include keyword stuffing, cloaking, and using private link networks. If you would like to improve website SEO, it is necessary to build a solid SEO foundation. Start by going through a proper technical website audit. After all, user experience should be the most fundamental part you should care about, and such a target aligns with white hat SEO tactics.



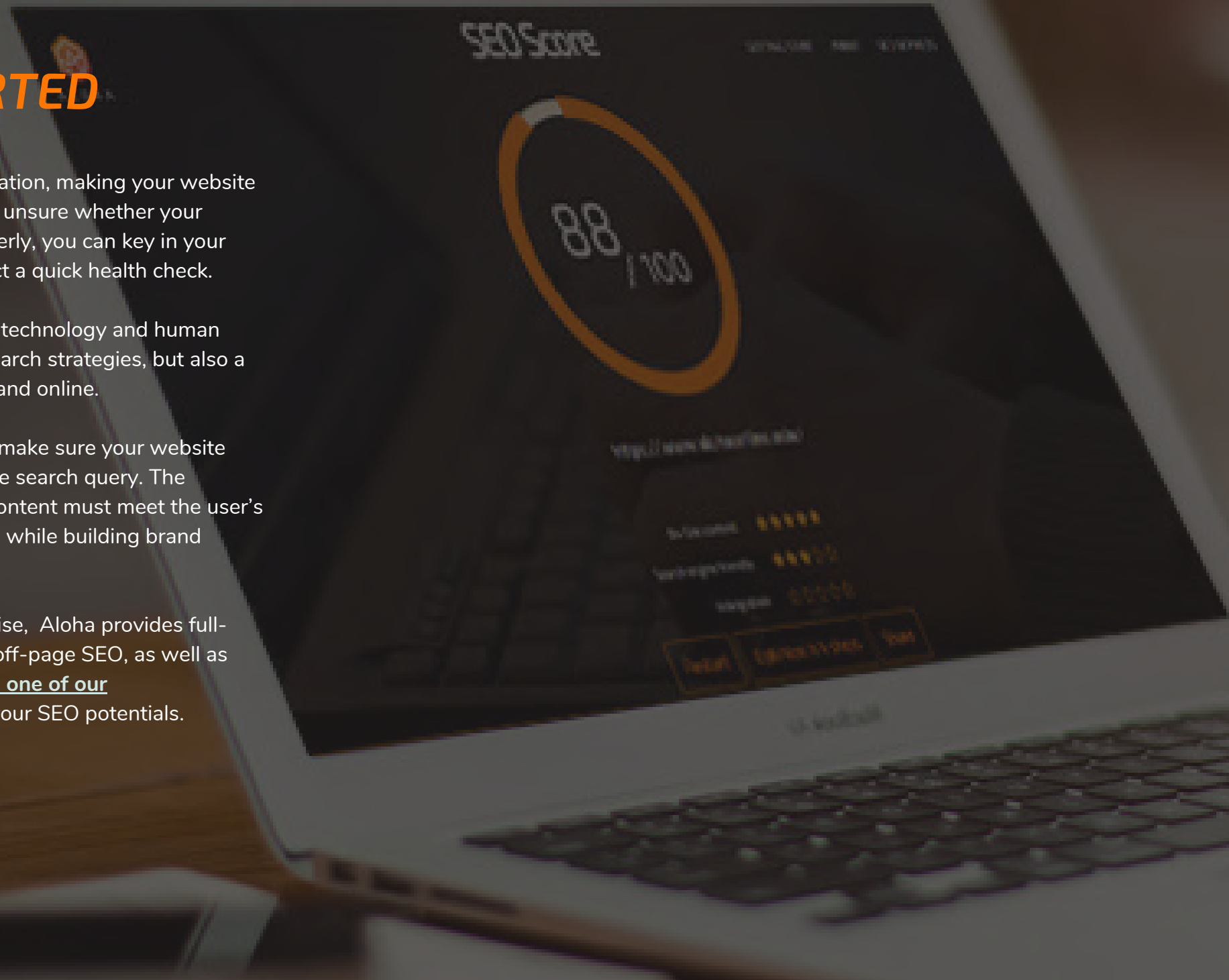
## WRAP UP & GET STARTED

These 28 key actions help build a better SEO foundation, making your website easily accessible and readable by Google. If you are unsure whether your website has implemented the above elements properly, you can key in your URL in our [Site Health Enhancer \(S.H.E.\)](#) to conduct a quick health check.

SEO is an ongoing process continuously shaped by technology and human behaviour. Digital marketers need more than just search strategies, but also a solid content strategy to communicate and sell a brand online.

It is safe to say, “Content is King”. It is important to make sure your website provides quality content that is highly relevant to the search query. The approach is truly customer-centred. Your website content must meet the user’s search intent and deliver what the user is expecting while building brand awareness in the long term.

Leveraging the synergy of our SEO tech and expertise, Aloha provides full-range SEO services from technical to on-page and off-page SEO, as well as data-driven website content strategies. [Speak with one of our representatives today](#) to understand and unleash your SEO potentials.





Get a 1-month free trial of our SEO tool Quanery to gain a complete view of your organic search data.





## About Aloha Group Limited

Aloha is a Hong Kong based digital marketing tech company founded in 2016 by a team of digital experts specializing in SEO, AI, data analytics and marketing. Aloha is an active member of the HKSTP Incu-Tech Programme with our own developed SEO tech platforms Quanery and Site Health Enhancer (S.H.E.).

We are committed to help transform businesses into the digital space with a focus on building a solid SEO foundation while incorporating various digital channels to expand and enhance our client's digital footprint.

Headquartered in Hong Kong and with offices in Taiwan and Singapore, we are currently managing various digital campaigns across the Greater China, Asia Pacific, UK, Australia and the US.

Digital marketing shouldn't be like rocket science; let Aloha be the bridge to make digital marketing easier and more approachable for your business!

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🌐 <https://www.alohaonline.asia>

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