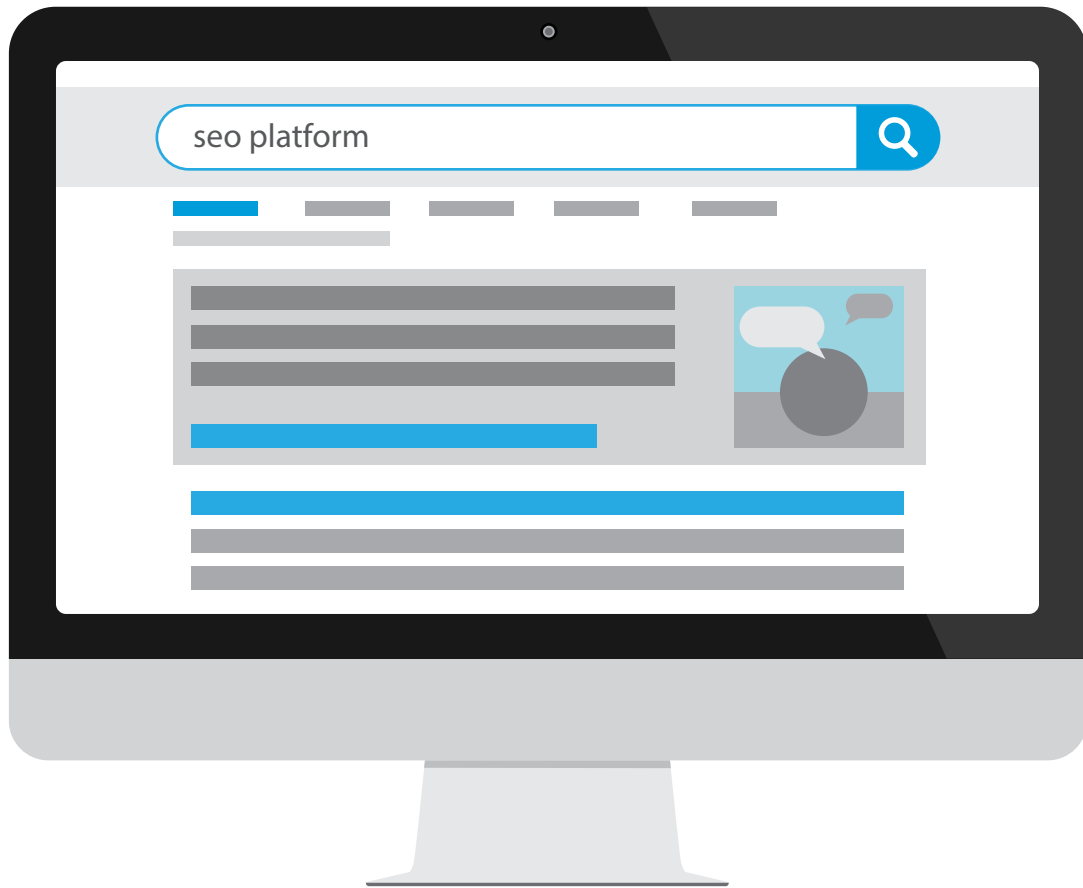


## The What, Why and How of Getting Quick Answer Boxes



**Learn more than 20 tactics to boost organic traffic**

# What are Quick Answers?

**Definition:** Quick Answers are highly-visible text snippet answers and links placed at the top of the Google SERPs. Also referred to synonymously as Quick Answer boxes, Rich Answers, Rich Answer boxes, Featured Snippets, and Google Answers.

The answer is pulled from high-ranking, reputable websites in the traditional search results

Here is a Quick Answer from BrightEdge.com. BrightEdge also ranks 3rd for this query. Note that its standard components are: Text, Title Tag, and URL.

The screenshot shows a Google search for "seo platform". The search bar contains "seo platform" and the Google logo is on the left. Below the search bar are navigation tabs: All, News, Videos, Shopping, Images, More, and Search tools. The search results show "About 23,200,000 results (0.55 seconds)". A Quick Answer snippet is displayed, containing the text: "BrightEdge is the global leader in enterprise content performance. As a SaaS technology **SEO platform** BrightEdge enables marketers to drive traffic, conversions, and revenue from their largest marketing channel – organic search." Below this text is a title tag: "SEO and Content Performance Platform | SEO Platform - BrightEdge" and a URL: "www.brightedge.com/products/platform". A note below the URL says "You visited this page." To the right of the snippet is a link: "About this result • Feedback". Below the snippet are two search results from Search Engine Land: "The Top SEO Platforms: Forrester Wave Report - Search Engine Land" and "Enterprise SEO Platforms: A Marketer's Guide - Search Engine Land".

Such Quick Answers appear in **20-40%** of Google US English SERP results for typical question and definition-style queries – often those phrased in the ‘how-to’ and ‘what-is’ format. Google reports that when they “recognize that a query asks a question, we programmatically detect pages that answer the user’s question and display a snippet as a featured snippet in the search results.”

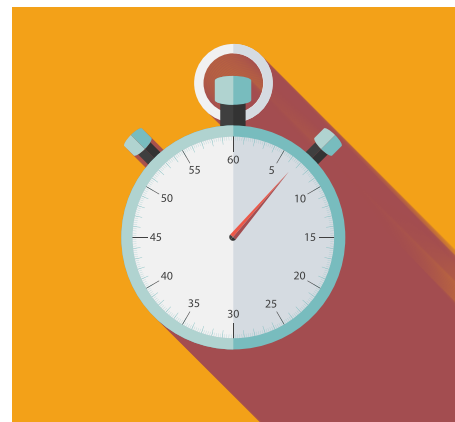
The answer is pulled from high-ranking, reputable websites in the traditional search results. The introduction of the Quick Answer box has caused huge shifts in the search behavior and click curve for many users, thus impacting the financial success of a number of websites.

**...a result with Quick Answers and a high ranking had substantially more traffic than a similar high-ranking result alone**

Google has been expanding the number of query results with their Quick Answer box in the last 12 months, which means that these changes will only be increasingly impactful. Brands that are unprepared for these Quick Answers in their industry could find themselves struggling.

## Will Quick Answers boost my traffic?

A fundamental question marketers ask on this topic is, "Do I really want a Quick Answer box or will it cannibalize my organic traffic?" The answer is that the Quick Answer boxes have been shown to create a net gain. In one study by Adobe this net gain was 17% - the top blended position in the SERPs commands such a high CTR that it makes up for the people who get their question answered in the SERPs.



In another observation within the BrightEdge account, a result with Quick Answers and a high ranking had substantially more traffic than a similar high-ranking result alone. Net-net it is better to have a Quick Answer than not.

Additionally, Stone Temple Consulting research has found that the turnover with which site and content appears in the Quick Answer box is high with 55% churn over six months. This means there is an ongoing opportunity for an astute marketer to make progress now in securing Quick Answer boxes.

**...the turnover of which site and content appears in the Quick Answer box is high - 55% over 6 months**

Quick Answers also appear in mobile SERPs and the SERP layout may be different than what appears in desktop. The text in the Quick Answer is usually a complete sentence or two lifted from the body of the page

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### **History Note: Google's dedication to the user experience and convenience**

Since its founding in 1998, Google has made it clear that its primary concern is the end user. Beginning with the Knowledge Graph in 2012, Google has been working towards relevance to consumer intent and context and more convenience. The search engine engineers have been carefully constructing means of interpreting different concepts and having the algorithm 'understand' how different ideas are related. Growth in prevalence of Quick Answers is consistent with that line of thinking.

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# Why are Google's Quick Answers important for brands?

As stated above, the Quick Answer appears up to 40% of the time for some types of queries. When you consider the number of people who are just scanning these answer boxes and then clicking off the SERP with their question answered, it is easy to see how the traffic rates for websites can be impacted.

## The box is not always pulled from the first result on the SERP

Indeed, these snippet answers have a major impact on traffic. Firstly, the box is not always pulled from the first result on the SERP. Suddenly, the page that ranks in position 3 or 5, but is selected by Google for the Quick Answer box, is thrust to the front and center of the page. For these situations, gaining this prominent position can help you increase traffic and reach, even without earning classic position one.

It is important, however, to dig deeper than these cursory numbers. For example, the people who are viewing the answer and then clicking off without following through to a particular search result were likely low-engagement visitors. They were only interested in viewing their answer, not in engaging with a particular brand.

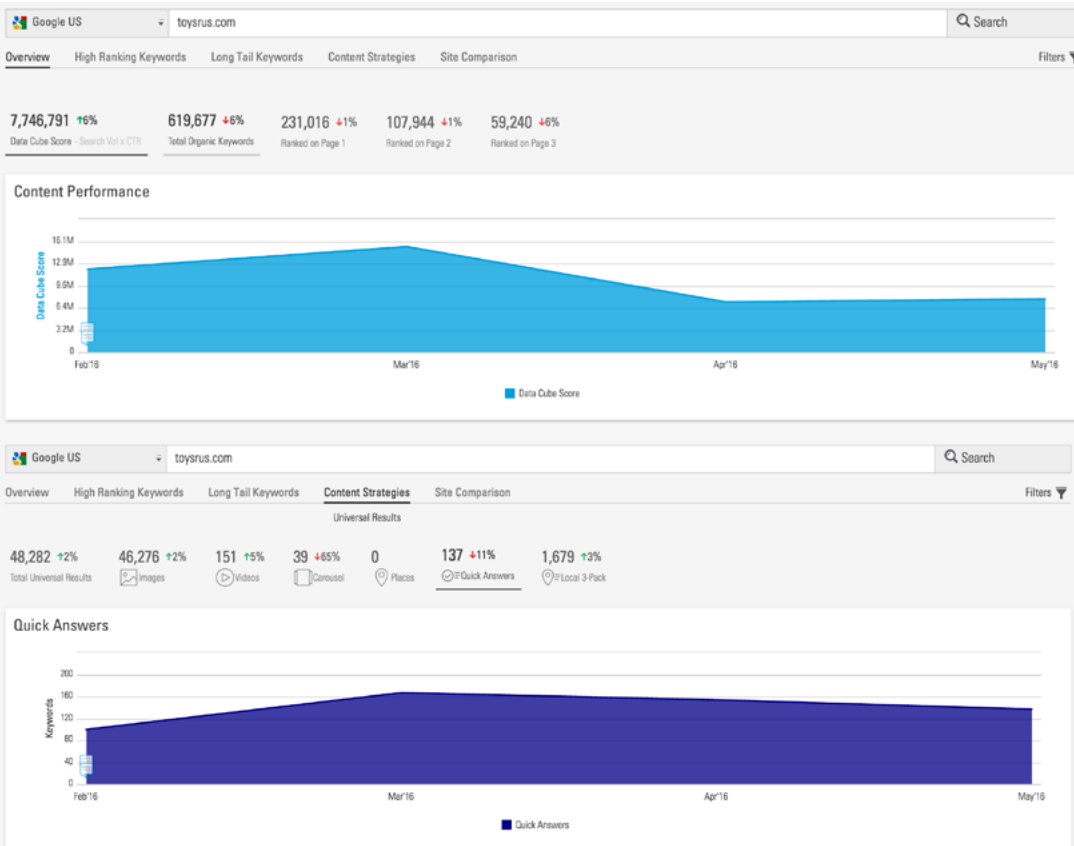


This also means that the people who do click through to your website are likely more interested in a deeper engagement with what you have to say. They are already clearly indicating that they want more information than they can find in the Quick Answer box.

**Earning the Quick Answer Box caused a jump in traffic by over 500% and a jump in revenue from organic traffic by 600%**

Many success cases suggest that getting into Quick Answers causes a huge boost in traffic. A brand featured in one of the case studies worked to optimize their content for a particular high-value keyword and was able to earn that Quick Answer box after four months<sup>1</sup>. Once they received the box, they saw a jump in traffic by over 500% and a jump in revenue from organic traffic by 600%. During this period, the site itself also never ranked higher than position 4 on the SERP. In other words, it was the Quick Answer box and the attention it drove to this particular result that caused an increase in qualified traffic.

This trend is also evident when looking at these Data Cube charts for ToysRUs.com. The first chart shows the Quick Answer trends for the URL, the second the content performance score.

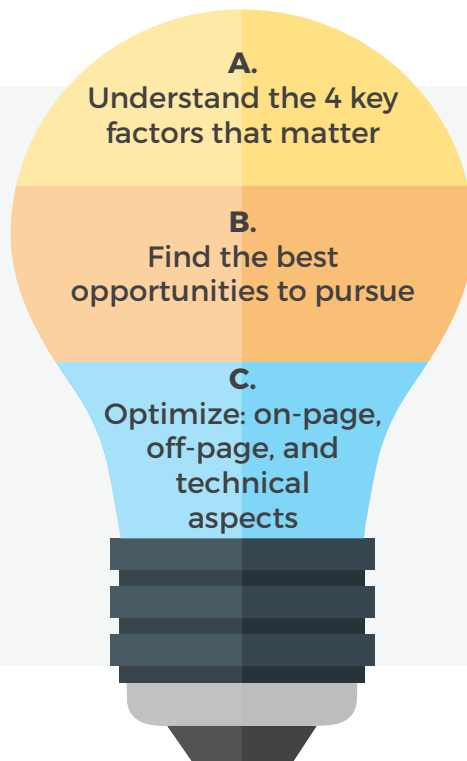


To ensure that your site does not fall behind, you need to optimize your applicable pages to maximize your opportunities to gain a Quick Answer.

<sup>1</sup> Source: Search Engine Land ([link](#))

# 3 How to get into Quick Answers?

## 3-Step framework for getting Quick Answers



## A 4 Key Factors That Matter

There are a few key features that strongly correlate to a particular site being afforded a Quick Answer box. Paying attention to them will help boost your chances of having a snippet taken from your page.

### 1 Be in the Top 5 on the SERP

An estimated 77 percent of the Quick Answer responses are taken from websites ranked within the top five. Although you might occasionally see results that break this rule, it is clear that if you want to increase the chances of getting your response highlighted in a box, you want to have a strong ranking on the SERP.

## 2 Have at least 1,000+ links to your domain

Referring domains are an excellent way to tell Google that your site is viewed as reputable and that people trust what you have to say. About 81 percent of the sites with a Quick Answer have a minimum of 1,000 referring domains. Fifty percent, however, have over 10,000. When it comes to cultivating these links, the more you have the stronger your site will be.

## 3 Have less than 2,000 words on a page

Research has shown that most of the sites ranking in the top slots on Google are longer, **with 1,500 words** widely considered to be ideal for most topics. However, there appears to be a maximum as well - an estimated 70 percent of the sites with Quick Answers have less than 2,000 words.

## 4 Good user engagement

Like the referring domains, user engagement tells Google that people like what you have to say and value your opinion. Sites with high bounce rates generally did not answer their visitors' needs and did not help with their query. A site that boasts strong engagement numbers, however, is likely well regarded on the topic and will produce the quality answer that Google would want to display.

Find the Best Quick Answer Opportunities





# B Find the Best Quick Answer Opportunities

Keeping these four key factors in mind, you now need to choose the best opportunities to pursue. The main challenge here is picking the keywords for which you have a high chance of making it into Quick Answers. BrightEdge can be a valuable platform is helping brands identify the most viable opportunities.

You must first identify where your best opportunities lie to receive a Google Quick Answer box. Focus your efforts on the topics that are most associated with your domain. In other words, focus on the queries and keywords you already rank high on or those related to them. Working on these opportunities you are more likely to be rewarded with the box.

## Step 1. Draft a keyword list

1. Define the topics that are most associated with your domain.
  - Use the BrightEdge Keyword Reporting to see on which topics you generally rank high. Remembering the high correlation between those top 5 positions in the SERP and the rich answer box, you might not want to go after keywords for which you have trouble getting ranked at least in the top 20 positions.
2. You can also use Data Cube in BrightEdge to see how many of your keywords already have Quick Answers results. Check for additional opportunities around those keywords that you are currently not capturing. To see the Quick Answer data for your keyword, follow these steps:
  - Go to Data Cube in your BrightEdge account.
  - Run search for a keyword,
  - Click Filters and select "Universal listing," "Contains," and then "Quick Answers". Then hit "Add."
3. Following the knowledge areas you identified, select 50-100 topics (or more) you want to work on.

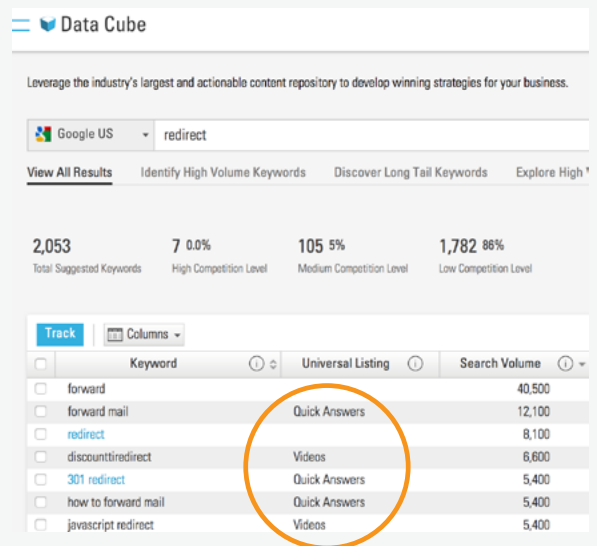
## Step 2. Choose the best opportunities

Now you have a list of 50-100 topics you could work on getting into a Quick Answer box. The question now is - how do you find the best opportunities to get into a Quick Answer box? The best way to do it is to analyze every topic on the list and see if it is viable to work on it. Here is how you could do it.

Search for the query associated with the topic in DataCube and see if this query or other related queries (DataCube will show them) have Quick Answers.

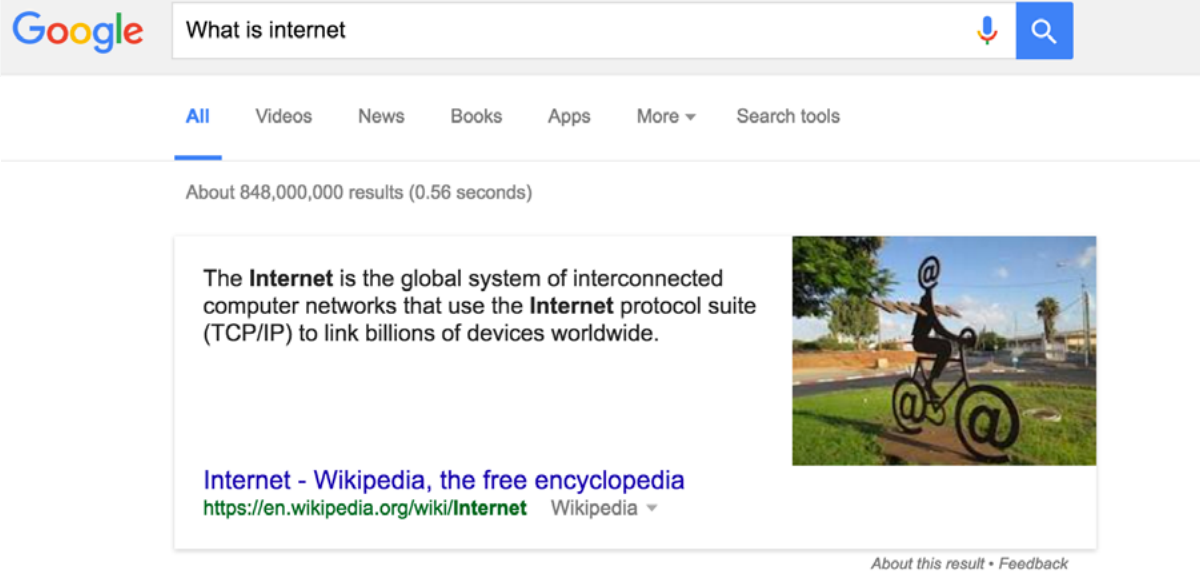
### Where do I see that?

On the resulting chart, you will notice that the far right column, labeled Universal Results, lists the type of results that this keyword contains, such as Quick Answers, Local Search or Videos. You might also want to add a filter to show only the results with/without the Quick Answer box.



If this/related query already has a Quick Answer it means this is a potential opportunity. But in order to evaluate if it is a good opportunity, do Google search and see what is the quality of the Quick Answer currently provided.

- If the page containing the answer is low quality and the domain does not have higher authority on the topic than yours, this is a good opportunity to go after.
- If the page containing the answer is high quality and the domain has higher authority on the topic than yours, this is probably a hard one to pursue.



The screenshot shows a Google search for "What is internet". The search bar contains the text "What is internet" and a search icon. Below the search bar, there are navigation tabs for "All", "Videos", "News", "Books", "Apps", "More", and "Search tools". The search results show "About 848,000,000 results (0.56 seconds)". A Quick Answer snippet is displayed, featuring a text box with the definition: "The **Internet** is the global system of interconnected computer networks that use the **Internet** protocol suite (TCP/IP) to link billions of devices worldwide." To the right of the text is an image of a person riding a bicycle with '@' symbols on the wheels. Below the text is a link to "Internet - Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia" with the URL "https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Internet" and a "Wikipedia" logo. At the bottom right of the snippet, there is a link for "About this result • Feedback".

You might not want to compete with Wikipedia on such generic queries given its domain authority and the amount of backlinks. However, you can still compete with it on very specific topics where your authority is higher.

**If this/related query does not have a Quick Answer**, it means this is a potentially unconquered space. But before you define this opportunity as worthy, think whether this query would be best answered by a Quick Answer snippet or if users would prefer a Video or Local 3-Pack. If the topic is more likely to generate a Video result or Local 3-Pack, deprioritize it. If you think this is a real opportunity and you have a good chance of making it to the top of the SERP, go for it.

### Important to remember

As you do the research on each of the queries, create a list of 1 main and 2-3 closely related keywords for each page you are going to optimize because the semantic breadth and matching also helps you get Quick Answers. As you analyze all the topics, you will get a shorter list to work on – often times it is about 30-40% of the original list.

# On-Page Optimization for Quick Answers: 7 Top Techniques

Use these on-page optimization best practices to maximize the chances of getting your website page into Quick Answers.

- 1. Structure the page with the user experience in mind.** Generally, this means keeping paragraphs short (350-500 characters) and using scannable lists when applicable. Headings can also be valuable to ensure that people can find the topics that interest them the most within the piece.
- 2. Include your target question into H1.** This way you will make sure that Google understands your intention with a particular page.
- 3. Provide a short, direct answer to your question in the first paragraph.** If your question is best answered with a list, then include either ordered list (<ol>) or unordered list tags (<ul>). As you develop the rest of your copy, use variations of your keyword – explore related keywords in BrightEdge Data Cube or with Google’s “People also searched for…” on the SERP.
- 4. Use ‘how to’ or other lists in your page as appropriate.** If you use unordered lists, consider adding “Step 1, Step 2 etc.” to each of the bullets as appropriate to make it easier for Google to interpret it.



## What is HTTPS vs HTTP?

HTTP helps web users to retrieve web pages. HTTPS does the same, but securely, so that unauthorized users cannot access information they are not supposed to have.

### Definitions: what do the terms mean?

- HTTP- HyperText Transfer Protocol
- HTTPS- Secure HyperText Transfer Protocol

### HTTPS vs HTTP and SSL

Both HTTP and HTTPS work to help web users transfer and receive information over the Internet. HTTPS with its secure information transfer is particularly important for sites where sensitive information is sent, such as e-commerce sites, where people give credit card information. HTTPS works with the protocol known as SSL, or Secure Sockets Layer, to encrypt sensitive data, prevent the alteration or corruption of data during transfer and authenticate certain users to communicate with the website.

### Should I be using HTTPS?

Any site that deals with secure information should definitely be using HTTPS. Even sites that do not deal specifically with sensitive data, however, can still benefit from HTTPS.

### HTTPS as a new ranking factor

Google announced in 2014 that they were going to be considering HTTPS a light ranking factor in an effort to encourage security on the web (check out the post on [HTTPS vs HTTP and SEO](#)). Even outside of Google's recommendations, sites that make the switch to HTTPS often find that customers regard their site as more authentic. The site is also more protected from damages that can occur



<http://www.brightedge.com/glossary/https-vs-http>

- 5. Include media content on the page: images, videos, infographics and more.** Make sure these media materials are consistent with your content and demonstrate the depth of your knowledge. Images are a must-have: Google will sometimes include them into the Quick Answer box, which can make your snippet even more striking.
- 6. Link to other related pages on your website:** This will demonstrate to Google that you have the contextual breadth of knowledge needed to provide users with a trustworthy, high-value answer.
- 7. Create “Related Materials”, “Related Guides” sections** at the bottom of the page

## How to create a strong NAP record for SEO?

1. Make sure this critical information is displayed prominently on your website so that it can be easily read by your customers and by Google.
2. Claim your Google+ Local/Google My Business listings and make sure to update them with the correct information.
3. Use Google to uncover potentially incorrect listings. You can use Google site operators, such as [site:yelp.com](http://site:yelp.com) “my business” to search specific directories or you can try searching for your phone number, address or business name.
4. Use a resource, like [this compilation of important listing sites](#), to get started correcting incorrect listings.
5. If you are ever going to be changing information about your business, such as the address or phone number, make sure to get your listings organized quickly to avoid having the same problem again.



NAP can have an enormous impact on brands because it gives customers easy access to the most critical information about your brand. Take the time to make sure your listings are accurate to avoid potential problems in the SERPs.

## Related materials

- Case Study: [Wellbiz Brands success in local SEO using BrightEdge](#)
- Understanding the latest [Google SERP layout changes](#)
- Planning an [SEO Marketing Strategy](#)
- Understand [why local SEO becomes hyperlocal](#)

<http://www.brightedge.com/glossary/importance-accurate-name-address-phone-number>

Off-page SEO helps to establish your site within the greater digital ecosystem. As already discussed, websites that link back to your page help to communicate that your material is trustworthy. Other off-page factors, like social media shares, help to bring you more readers and greater visibility, positively impacting the rest of your ranking, traffic, and engagement.

1. **Work on cultivating backlinks.** While a large part of this process is writing high-quality content that people want to see and read and then distributing it widely, you can also be proactive.

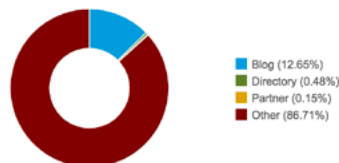
Consider:

- Writing guest posts and including links back your site either in the signature or as a source for the piece.
- Using BrightEdge platform features, like the BrightEdge backlink profile, to uncover potential link-building opportunities – such as a well-respected industry leader referencing your research. Asking for a link to your page can help you improve the influencer connections, awareness, and general reputation of your own site.
- Monitor progress with BrightEdge Backlink Reporting. This will help you see how many links are coming in from different sites so you can focus on building the links with the best value.

## Backlink Performance

Search  X

Backlink Content Type for ToysRus



% Followed Links for ToysRus



View by: Backlink Pages

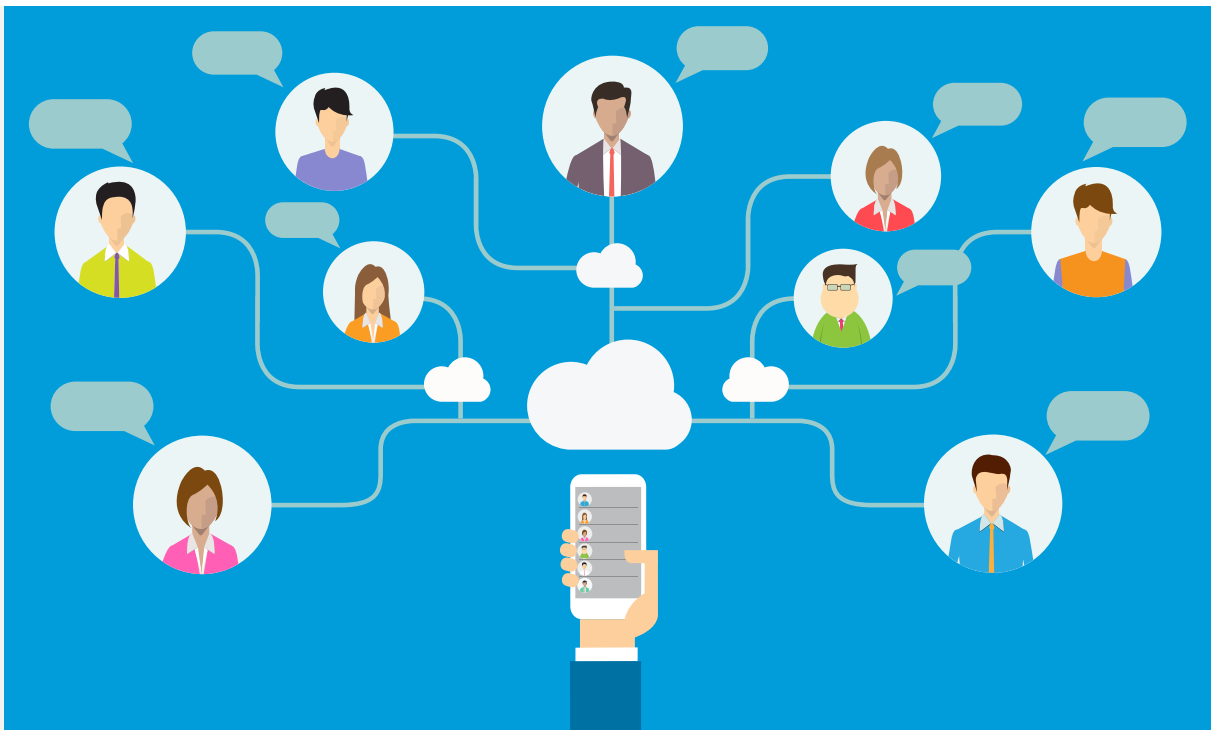
Backlink Domains

Export to CSV

Search Advanced Filter

#	Backlink Domain	Domain Authority	Total # of Backlink Pages
1	wikipedia.org	100	3
2	livejournal.com	98	2
3	ft.com	98	3
4	google.com	97	14
5	msdn.com	97	4

- 2. Share a link of your page via your social media platforms, particularly Google+.** Consider the platforms that cater most to your targeted audience and focus your distribution on these areas.
- 3. Make sure that your site has been submitted to the Google Search Console** to improve its visibility.
- 4. Register for WikiData** – this is one of the important information sources for the Knowledge Graph. However, Quick Answers are not officially part of Google Knowledge Graph.



Technical SEO



- 1. Using Schema markup** makes it very clear to Google the type of information that you have to offer. Since Google wants to be able to rapidly pull information for their Quick Answers box, including this markup will help Google quickly interpret your information and determine the value of your site.
- 2. Optimize the page for mobile.** In the modern search climate with the rise in mobile – more searches are now made on mobile devices compared to desktop – it is also critical that your page is mobile-optimized. Mobile optimization includes:
  - a.** Responsive design or a 1:1 mobile-specific site with proper redirects.
  - b.** A site with navigation that has been simplified for mobile users and is easy to use on a touch screen. Accordion menus are often helpful. Also remember to position clickable buttons far enough away from each other that people will not accidentally click the wrong one.
  - c.** Featured content that aligns with the needs of mobile users.
- 3. Include the page into your XML Sitemap.** This will improve the search engine's ability to crawl the page and categorize it correctly. Google also wants to see that the page is a part of a site structure and that it is referenced from others pages that contain relevant content.

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## Schema – What is it?

Schema is a type of microdata that you use to label the different elements of your page. This helps the search engines understand the information your site contains, thus empowering it to offer even more relevant results to users. The structure itself was developed by Google, Microsoft, Yahoo and Yandex, so you can trust that your efforts will be recognized by the major search engines.

Generally, the more page information you markup, the better your site will fare. You want to keep in mind, however, that only the content visible to other people should be included. Any hidden page elements or other private material should not have microdata.

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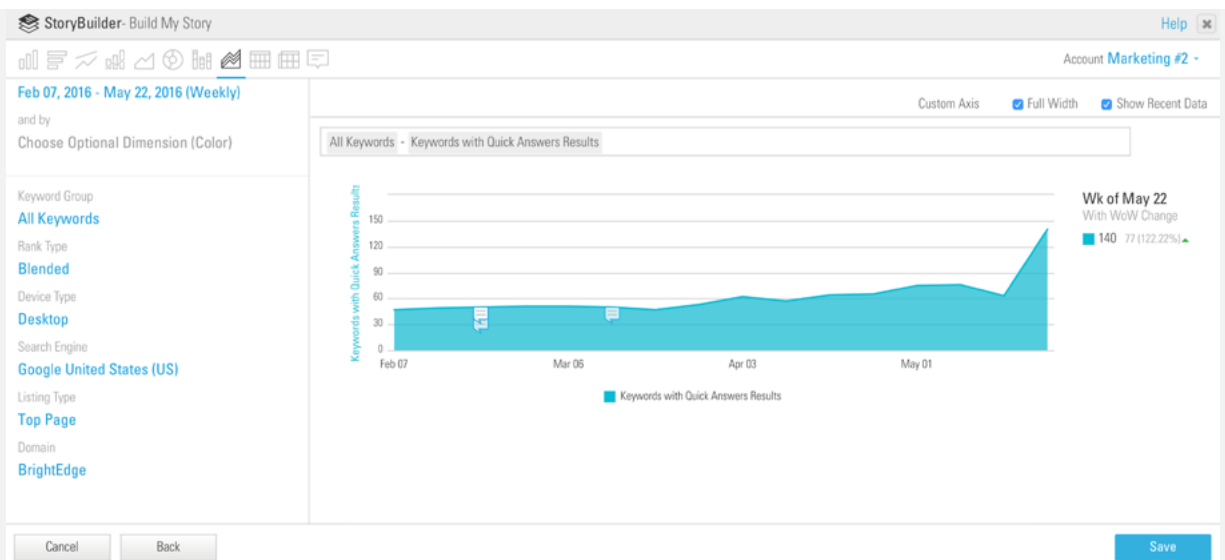
## Track Progress

Your optimization process is not complete until you see the results start to emerge. It is important to track everything about your Quick Answers efforts.

You can conveniently use the BrightEdge StoryBuilder to gain a better understanding of how your efforts are impacting your ranking, your traffic, and conversions as well as your Quick Answers performance.

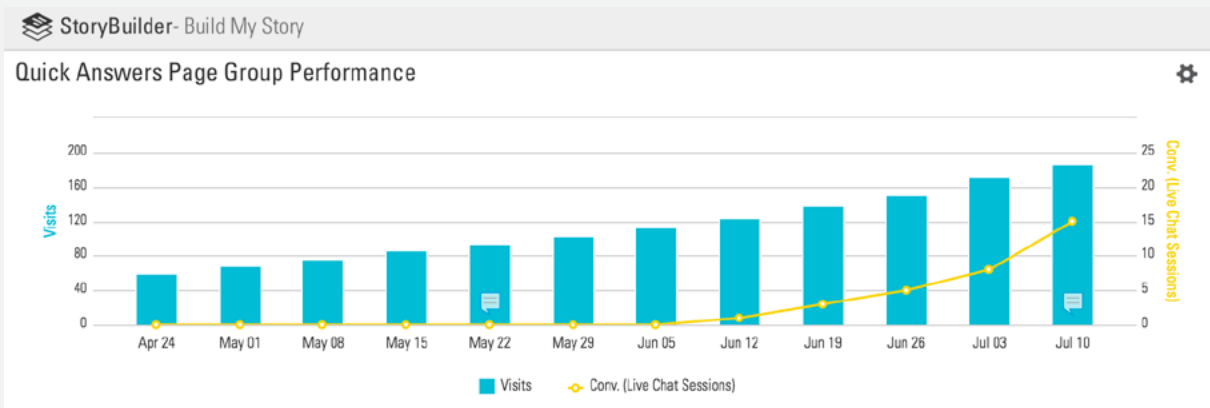
Create a dashboard specifically for this campaign. Select the charts that are most applicable to you and your industry. You want charts that provide you with an understanding of your success rate with gaining Quick Answer boxes and how those successes are impacting your brand overall. For example, to make a chart of your Quick Answers results by time period, follow these steps.

- Go into your BrightEdge account and select StoryBuilder
- Click Add a Chart
- Select "How is my content listing in Universal Search"
- On the left-hand menu, select the drop-down menu for 'Show' and select Quick Answers



It is also very important to precisely measure how Quick Answers influence your business results. To do that you could add a chart showing how many website conversions were driven by pages you optimized for Quick Answers:

- Create a page group for your Quick Answers optimized pages
- In StoryBuilder click “Add Chart,” select “Create Custom Story”
- Select “Bar Line,” build a chart “From: Page Group,” “Show Visits and Conversions”
- Select the page group you created and save the chart



Google Quick Answers is just one part of the strategy employed by the search engine to provide users with easy, convenient answers. Ignoring this development, however, can hurt your traffic rates and your ability to attract the attention of visitors. Use the BrightEdge platform to increase your chances of getting Quick Answers results and traffic for your content.

## What do I do now?

### Register for a demo.

Our product experts will bring these 3 steps of getting into Quick Answers to life in a compelling online demo. During this presentation, you will be able to see what can be done for your specific business and industry case.

