



SEO, Content Marketing, and Technology in EB-5



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These days, a high-quality, responsive website is not just an additional way to drive web traffic but the bare minimum needed to stay competitive. Today's websites need to offer unique and compelling content, delivered consistently in an easy-to-read format, and they need to stand out from the crowd of other sites doing the same thing. That is where Search Engine Optimization (SEO), combined with a user-friendly site experience, can help companies direct the right traffic to their sites, find the right audience for their content, and convert that audience into leads and investors.

What is SEO? The short answer: it is a way of building your site's content to ensure that when your target audience searches for relevant topics on the leading search engines, your site shows up in the top results.

How do you optimize your site? That is a bit more complicated. Imagine SEO as a game of football, only the end zone keeps moving around on the field. Today, your site may show up as the number one result for "Regional Centers in Sacramento"; tomorrow, you may be on the second page. Google and other search engines keep changing the algorithms they use, and do not release the full details

of these changes. Search engine optimizers spend countless hours studying analytics and comparing search results to learn what SEO techniques work, what has stopped working, and what actions could actually penalize your site.

BASIC SEO:

Using keywords, adding alt-tags to images, and including proper headers and footers are all basic optimization techniques. They are all good things to do, but technical optimization alone will not necessarily be enough to stay at the top of the search results. Your competitors are also working on revising their sites, improving their keywords, and generating new content—all things that affect rankings. Staying on the front page requires staying informed about the newest changes and additions to the leading search engine algorithms.

One of the biggest challenges in EB-5 SEO is making sure the target audience is actually able to find your site. Many countries use Google for their primary search engine, but some current EB-5 markets, like China and Russia, rely on their own engines.

China, the largest EB-5 market, has built its Internet usage around Baidu. The good news

Top Search Engines by Key EB5 Country		
China	Baidu	74.59%
Vietnam	Google	93.26%
South Korea	Google	65.29%
Taiwan	Google	87.01%
Brazil	Google	96.98%
India	Google	96.64%
Venezuela	Google	96.09%
Russian Federation	Yandex RU	47.87%

Source: Stat Counter: GlobalStats

is that from a base functionality perspective, Baidu has many of the same features as Google Analytics and the same basic procedures for integrating tags. Using Baidu Analytics, you will be able to keep an eye on your site's performance, goal completion and traffic flow as well as measure your site's performance against specific keywords. The hard part will be selecting appropriate keywords. If you are targeting China, it would be beneficial for you to become familiar with Baidu as a search engine. It offers an impressive set of tracking features, including current overall search trends and search trends by interest. Like Google, Baidu tracks trends, so you may not get exact results unless you are specifically measuring keywords for your site, but tracking is a good place to start your keyword refinement. When selecting keywords, it's important to not only use the dominant language of the targeted country but also to double-check context. Certain terms like "EB-5" may only be found through alternate variations such as "EB5" or by using a different term altogether.

Other factors that can benefit your site's overseas performance are having a local domain, hosting close to your target audience, and paying close attention to the design aesthetics of the country you are targeting. Site speed matters for both user experience and SEO rankings. If you plan to host in China, you will need an Internet Content Provider license (ICP License) issued by the Chinese Ministry of Industry and Information Technology. You can apply for the license directly if you have an office in China, or indirectly by partnering with a local third party.

ADVANCED SEO:

2017 has seen a greater focus on the following elements:

- User experience: Context, readability, and overall user experience are key factors in the leading search engines'

current algorithms. Being seen as a reputable and dependable source of useful information is key to becoming a highly-ranked site, especially in highly competitive searches. Content marketing has become inseparable from SEO, and video and other media have become critical components of a well-rounded digital marketing platform.

- Quality content: Having high-quality content is essential, and that counts for visuals as well as text. Avoid relying on stock photography, and consider using photos of your team and the projects you are working on as well as your successful completed projects. Showing who you are, and what you have done, builds credibility with your audience. (Take care, however, to avoid inappropriate content such as the DHS logo, representations that look like guarantees, and project information that could be interpreted as general solicitation.) Web audiences are more tech-savvy than ever, and have high expectations for their online experiences. In fact, most visitors to your site make the decision to stay or leave in under fifteen seconds. First impressions matter. Content also matters to regulators, who routinely access public sites to check for violations.
- Social media integration: Social media visibility continues to integrate further into your digital marketing strategy, as it provides new ways to find your target audience and direct attention to your content. Without a well-thought-out strategy for creating and deploying content, as well as maintaining new relationships and engaging with the new community you are building, you may see a limited return on your social media investment. There is an ever-increasing variety of social media platforms, and they might not all work for your message and overall marketing approach. It can be helpful to work with a social media marketer who can help your team filter out the noise, and help build a network that contributes to your messaging.
- Once again, know your audience. If you are working in China you must use WeChat. However, WhatsApp is the world's most popular messaging platform with 55.6% market share. These platforms become integral to your communication strategy, as most countries we

target for EB-5 rely primarily on mobile devices.

Now that you are finding your audience, how do you keep them engaged?

Your images are tagged, and your regularly-scheduled content is engaging, relevant, and keyword-rich. Authoritative sites have started linking to yours. Now what? What else can you offer your audience to convert your visitors to leads, and your leads to investors? Unfortunately, there is not a "one-size-fits-all" answer to these questions; your core audience may have a unique set of needs and expectations. However, here are some questions to keep in mind to help you get started as you review your site:

1. How are you measuring your traffic? Do you have Google Analytics or another comparable system implemented? Figuring out the flow of traffic through your site is a critical first step. You need to know where you are losing viewers, and how you can improve their experience to lead to conversions.
2. What features can you offer? What information do your clients request most? How can you improve on delivering this information? How can you provide existing clients with updates and relevant news in a way that also builds your brand?
3. How do you keep track of your leads? Do you have an easy-to-use database of leads and current clients? Can you easily locate all their associated files?
4. How are you communicating with your leads and clients? There is an art to emails—too many words, or too few, will either be caught in spam filters or cause the reader to unsubscribe. Providing information without a clear call-to-action may not help convert leads or provide value to your company.

To be on the cutting edge of SEO and Content Marketing, and to integrate the latest technical solutions, regional centers need more than just a marketing company or an off-the-shelf CRM solution. They need to understand what drives traffic to their EB-5 site based on their target audience and the goals of their web-based presence. We deal with different cultures, and what is appealing to us may not resonate with the intended audience. Do your research and make your technology investments count! ▶