Case Study: How Galileo Increased Organic Traffic by 434%

How Galileo Helped Meadowlark Motel Increase Organic Traffic by 434% with Keyword Research (and No Link Building!)

Meadowlark Motel, a destination motel in Maggie Valley, NC, is a place that evokes the nostalgia of roadside motor courts of the past with a modern and vibrant "Chic Appalachian" feel. Their website reflects the longing for adventure and relaxation that travelers to the NC Smoky Mountains are looking for. However, the owner of Meadowlark Motel felt that the website wasn't bringing in the type of traffic that drives those all-important conversions.

> *"Our website is well-designed, attractive, and informative, but it wasn't pulling in the kind of qualified leads that we knew were out there,"*
> *said Simone Woodyear McElroy, owner of Meadowlark Motel.*
> *"We knew there was untapped potential there, so we turned to Galileo Tech Media to help us better utilize our website with SEO."*

Oftentimes, SEO is about elements hiding in plain sight. This includes finding opportunities for organic search growth with data directly from the source - Google!

Galileo uses a process to discover these opportunities, using a Content Audit Template and a research strategy with data from Google Search Console. With this process, Galileo was able to increase organic traffic for the Meadowlark Motel by 434% Month over Month (MoM) Also, over time, the target page Things to Do in NC Mountains, has become one of the most visited pages on the site, accruing over 1,000 organic visits in a month!

Here's how
we did it

✓ BrightEdge Enterprise SEO Technology

BrightEdge is the leading SEO solution and content performance marketing platform, and it is a standard tool for Galileo clients. We use BrightEdge technologies to generate monthly reports, identify content opportunities, locate technical SEO errors, target Featured Snippet placements and more. BrightEdge operates as an extension of Galileo's technical and strategic teams.

✓ Identify keyword opportunities with a content audit

A Content Audit performed for SEO is a great way to take inventory of your website's pages and see which pages are underperforming and which ones can easily be improved. Galileo has developed a Content Audit that pulls in data from these sources:

- Screaming Frog
- Google Search Console
- Google Analytics
- Ahrefs

One of the best aspects of this template is that it pulls in the keyword responsible for bringing in the most clicks for each page. This is a great way to find opportunities to improve pages that are not optimized for what Google thinks it should be optimized for. Use the link below to download our Content Audit Template.

After conducting the audit, we had a good overview of the SEO performance of each page. One page stood out showing the keyword: "things to do in NC Mountains". The particular page was not optimized fully for this specific keyword. This gave us an opportunity to add more content to the page and use related keywords within target optimization areas (which we'll go over below)...

	A	B	C	F	G
1	Tasks		https://meadowlarkmotel.com/	Keywords	
2	Status	Task List	URL	Check GSC	GSC Keyword
3	☐	Optimize On Page	https://meadowlarkmotel.com/things-to-do-in-nc-mountains/	Check Metrics	things to do in nc mountains
4	☐		https://meadowlarkmotel.com/ghost-town-maggie-valley/	Check Metrics	maggie valley nc

After finding a page that looked like a good candidate for optimization, we used Google Search Console to do some more research. If you're not utilizing data from Google Search Console, you're missing out on essential data that can help your pages rank higher in the Google search results.

We noticed that the keyword "things to do in nc mountains" was in an average position of 9 with a click through rate (CTR) of 4%. We also noticed the ranking of another, more competitive keyword: "nc mountains". The additional traffic and engagement that was coming to the page because of our target keyword ("things to do in nc mountains") allowed this more competitive keyword to rank as well. This is a great example of the benefit of long tail keywords in SEO strategy. After all was done, the page was ranking for "nc mountains" on page 1 of Google.

Query ↑	Clicks	↓ Impressions	CTR	Position
nc mountains	0	58	0%	10.9
things to do in nc mountains	1	25	4%	9.2
asheville nc mountains	0	23	0%	9.7
asheville mountains	0	23	0%	10.9
how far is maggie valley from asheville	0	8	0%	10.1
things to do nc mountains	0	8	0%	11.6
things to do in the mountains	0	8	0%	12.9

QUERIES   PAGES   COUNTRIES   DEVICES   SEARCH APPEARANCE   DATES

After choosing the target keyword, the next step was to optimize the page specifically for that phrase. There are some very important optimization points that we focus on to improve the chances of a page moving up in the Google Search Results. These include:

- The URL
- Meta Title
- Heading Tags (H1, H2, H3 etc)
- Meta Description
- Content on the page

Optimizing the Meta Title is the most important and will have the most impact. To optimize for the primary keyword we made sure it was at the beginning of the phrase. This is what the change looked like:

Title Before: Explore Things to do in NC Mountains, from Maggie Valley to Asheville

Title After: Things to Do in NC Mountains ⛰ (20 Fun Attractions Near Mountain Towns)

(**BONUS TIP:** Sometimes Google will show emojis in your title. You can use an emoji directory to find relevant emojis. Occasionally, Google will decide not to show them, but you can try to add one, and once the title is re indexed in Google, see if it shows up. It can help with CTR if they do show up. We used the Mountain Emoji **https://emojipedia.org/mountain/**).

The next step was to optimize the Heading Tags. Since this was a list post, the best course of action was to make each list item a heading tag. So, for each "thing" to do, we converted into a heading tag (later we'll tell you what we did to give these headings even more SEO power).

Heading tags should be hierarchical. Generally, you'll have one H1 tag that contains the primary keyword but later in the phrase. Then, use H2s that are directly related to the H1 (multiple H2s can be used). Then, H3s should be directly related to each H2 and so forth (usually you can stop at H3s and your page will be optimized very well).

For the Meta Description and Content, we made sure the primary keyword and related keywords (you can use Google Search Console to find these too) were included within both.

Adding a Table of Contents

To make each heading more powerful, we added a Table of Contents that provides jump links to each Heading tag. This helps Google understand the page even better because it creates an internal link to each section of the page containing related keywords.

If you're using WordPress, you can use a plugin to do this without any coding knowledge. We used some simple HTML to build this out.

Recrawling

Once all the changes were made, we once again used Google Search Console, this time to force Google to recrawl the pages to see the new changes. While Google will eventually crawl the site on its own and see the changes, you'll see faster results using this method. It's a good way to tell Google you've tried to make the page better with some updates.

The Results

While this isn't always the case, just a day later we started to see results. The primary keyword moved from the bottom of page 1 up into the top 5 results. It also started to rank for more related keywords.

After 30 days, we checked results in Google Analytics. This is what we saw:

Landing Page	Acquisition			Behavior		
	Sessions	% New Sessions	New Users	Bounce Rate	Pages / Session	Avg. Session Duration
	434.69% ▲ 262 vs 49	0.25% ▼ 91.60% vs 91.84%	433.33% ▲ 240 vs 45	9.04% ▼ 81.68% vs 89.80%	14.47% ▲ 1.35 vs 1.18	813.40% ▲ 00:01:04 vs 00:00:07
1. /things-to-do-in-nc-mountains/						
Sep 22, 2019 - Oct 23, 2019	262 (100.00%)	91.60%	240 (100.00%)	81.68%	1.35	00:01:04
Aug 21, 2019 - Sep 21, 2019	49 (100.00%)	91.84%	45 (100.00%)	89.80%	1.18	00:00:07
% Change	434.69%	-0.25%	433.33%	-9.04%	14.47%	813.40%