

Bazaarvoice SEO implementation guide



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Bazaarvoice SEO

SEO, or search engine optimization, boosts your site's rankings in search engines like Google and Bing. User-generated content—such as reviews, questions, and answers—is the best and most efficient way to increase the freshness of your website. Our SEO solution integrates into the top-level domain of your website, where freshness matters most.

Improving content richness and freshness typically results in a noteworthy increase in search traffic. Although the process of forecasting the precise change in traffic for a particular site depends on numerous factors within an overall SEO strategy, client case studies show a typical 15 to 25 percent increase in traffic to product pages when user-generated content is exposed to search engine crawlers like Googlebot. Some clients have experienced an increase of as much as 200 percent. The recommended search-friendly SEO integration leverages cloud-based content delivery for ease of implementation and optimal performance.

The content you see is not what search engines see

Search engines can't read content called from JavaScript. This situation has caused problems across the internet since JavaScript was first implemented in websites in the mid-1990s. In the early years of the internet, `<noscript>` tags provided a workaround for the problem. However, as website development has grown more sophisticated, `<noscript>` tags have become obsolete and more advanced techniques are necessary to provide readable content to search bots.

Bazaarvoice content solutions use JavaScript to create an efficient and engaging user experience. Your Conversations implementation is not complete, however, if you implement only the JavaScript portion. JavaScript-only implementations have virtually no SEO value, which substantially reduces the potential ROI from Conversations.

How do I know whether my Conversations implementation is JavaScript only? If SEO content is integrated into your Conversations implementation, search bots can view SEO-friendly review content in the source code. However, this content is visible only if a search bot is detected -- you won't be able to see it simply by viewing the source code for a product page. Therefore, to find out if your source code includes review content, you'll need to simulate a search bot. Refer to the *Verify your SEO implementation* section for more information about bot simulation.

SEO best practices for your review pages

As the Google algorithm changes, so do SEO best-practice recommendations. Bazaarvoice strongly recommends you use the following configurations and implementation design features to produce maximum SEO value and an optimal user experience.

Show eight reviews on the product overview page.

Even if you have a reviews tab, users appreciate seeing review content when they scroll down a product overview page. Without reviews on the overview page, search engines will perceive your overview pages as stale. Adding eight reviews to the page substantially increases the freshness score in the Google algorithm. Additionally, pages with some visible reviews (not under a tab) more consistently receive Rich Snippet Stars in Google search results.

If you're using the configuration hub, set the number of reviews to display on the product overview page from the configuration hub. In the User Experience section, go to the Ratings & Reviews Configuration page and scroll down to the **Reviews on First Page** text box. Enter the number of reviews you want the page to show. If you're not using the configuration hub, file a support ticket to have the number of reviews set.

This technique is the element of the Bazaarvoice SEO strategy that is most likely to help your existing pages rise in search results for target phrases.

Sort reviews by relevance.

A relevance sort is better for both SEO and conversion. The relevance algorithm looks for reviews that are both rich with content and recently published, so it loads your initial display of reviews with content that attracts search engines.

If you're using the configuration hub, set the sorting methods available to users from the configuration hub. In the User Experience section, go to the Ratings & Reviews Configuration page and scroll down to the **Review Sort Options** list. Check the **Most Relevant** box to enable relevance sorting. If you're not using the configuration hub, file a support ticket to have the sorting methods set.

This technique improves a page's content-to-link ratio, density of target keywords, and the volume of synonyms and adjectives that support target keywords.

Paginate and show 30 reviews.

The users who most want to see all your review content are search-engine bots. Extensive testing confirms that both users and search-engine bots react most favorably when your site contains multiple pages for a product, and that pages after the overview contain about 30 reviews each.

If you considered pagination in the past and concluded that it was difficult to implement, be aware that the current Bazaarvoice SEO implementation method has simplified the process significantly.

This technique is the element of the Bazaarvoice SEO strategy most likely to increase long-tail traffic.

Adjust the title and headline text when paginating.

The new pages that result from pagination are the perfect place to target keywords that contain the word "reviews." In most cases, adding "reviews" to a logical place in the title and heading tags will help the pages rank highly for competitive search phrases like "[your shoe brand] reviews" or "[your hotel name] reviews."

This technique is the element of the Bazaarvoice SEO strategy most likely to help your pages rank highly for phrases that contain the word "reviews."

Be aware of potential challenges regarding tabs.

Search engines will index sentences and paragraphs hidden behind a tab, but Google is very particular about Rich Snippet Stars. For Rich Snippet Stars to display successfully, Google's search-engine bots must not perceive that review summary content is hidden by CSS in any way. You might have to alter the way tabs are implemented, or implement reviews outside of a tab, if Rich Snippet Stars don't show up in search results within 3-4 weeks of your implementation.

Implement Bazaarvoice SEO

To implement Bazaarvoice SEO, your technical team will need to add some code to your website's product pages. Code snippets and instructions are available for .NET, Java, PHP, and Python frameworks.

Before you start

The following prerequisites must be satisfied before implementing SEO integration:

- You must be using the Bazaarvoice JavaScript integration method.
- You must provide an XML product feed to Bazaarvoice. See the *Bazaarvoice data feeds* guide for more information about product feeds.
- You must know your Bazaarvoice deployment zone ID, product ID, and SEO key. You can find your SEO key on the SEO Configuration page of the configuration hub. If you're not using the configuration hub, file a support ticket to obtain this information.

Implementation process

To implement SEO, your developers will need to download code examples and instructions, then add the code to files on your web server.

1. From your browser, go to <http://github.com/bazaarvoice> . Click the **HostedUIResources** repository to open it. From the HostedUIResources page, click the **SEOIntegration** folder.
2. From the SEOIntegration page, click **Examples**. The page will display four folders of examples: one each for .NET, Java, PHP, and Python. Click the folder that corresponds to the code your company uses. From the page for that code type, click the **ZIP** button to download the folder to your computer.
3. From your code example folder, open and read the readme file. The readme document contains information that is critical for your implementation.
4. Copy the code (non-example) files from the code example folder into your web server directory.
5. Open and read the example file to learn how the code should look when implemented.
6. Use the information in the readme to determine which code to copy and paste into which location(s). This process is different for each code type.
7. Use the information in the readme document to customize the code for your company. You will need to add your company's deployment zone ID, product ID, and SEO key.

If technical limitations make the cloud-based solution not feasible for your site, Bazaarvoice also offers a downloadable daily ZIP file, which contains all the content necessary to make your implementation SEO-friendly. If you need to use the ZIP file method, downloading and installing the SDK using the above instructions will make your implementation process easier.

Refer to the Appendix of this guide for step-by-step instructions to implement the ZIP file method of SEO integration.

Verify your SEO implementation

After you've implemented SEO, you must confirm that search engines can actually see the user-generated content on your product pages.

Note

The SEO-friendly user-generated content is visible in your product pages only if a search bot is detected -- you won't be able to see it simply by viewing the source code for a product page. You'll need to use a search bot simulation tool, such as a Firefox plugin. Refer to the readme document in your code example file for guidelines about simulating a bot for the code type you're using.

Use the following checklist to verify that your SEO integration is implemented correctly.

<input type="checkbox"/>	Simulate a search-engine bot to view the user-generated content on your product pages.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Visually test the site to ensure that reviews or question- and answer-specific content does not appear twice.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Ensure that the review dates within the JavaScript match the review dates within the SEO block. If a review is approved on the same day on which the test is conducted, an acceptable difference of one day might exist between the dates.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Open the page source for a page with SEO enabled, copy a portion of a review from the hosted display, and attempt to locate that portion of the review in the page source. If the portion is visible within the page source, SEO content is loaded into the page code and made available to search engine crawlers. Indexing by search engines will not happen immediately. Allow a week or two for your new content to be indexed, and try this test on multiple pages.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Test that the SEO content is updating appropriately by rerunning the preceding tests at a later date on a product or category that has received new content since the last tests were run. Ensure the new content is visible within the SEO block.
<input type="checkbox"/>	View the page with JavaScript disabled and verify that the user-generated content is visible on the page.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Contact Bazaarvoice to request a live audit of your SEO integration from an SEO subject-matter expert. We'll schedule a brief meeting with your SEO team or agency to check for best practices and potential roadblocks.

For Bazaarvoice microsite clients: Redirect your site

Many Bazaarvoice clients have reviews indexed by search engines via *microsites*, which were part of an older Bazaarvoice SEO product and strategy. Bazaarvoice no longer recommends using microsites to extract SEO value from review content. While microsites can attract search traffic, they introduce substantial inconsistencies to the user experience and are not optimized to drive users to conversion events, resulting in sub-optimal ROI. Therefore, all Bazaarvoice-managed microsites will be phased out by early 2014 and redirected to main sites, where review content should be indexed.

How does the redirect work? Bazaarvoice will use a 60-day process to redirect microsite traffic to your main website. After confirming that search engines are indexing review content on the main site, we'll set a date to begin redirecting traffic. For the first 30 days, only product-level pages will redirect (code 301) to the appropriate product page. After 30 days, category-level pages will also redirect to the site's homepage, from which search-engine bots will crawl and find the appropriate page to index. After 60 days, the microsite homepage will redirect to the main site's homepage.

Why not redirect all pages on the same day? Redirecting all pages of a website on a single day typically leaves many redirects undiscovered for up to a year. We have used the above process since 2010 and have successfully redirected many microsites in just over 60 days. Because the process leverages the natural crawl behavior of search-engine bots, they find all pages more quickly than with other methods.

Can we redirect to defined category pages? Because the Bazaarvoice system for review content does not include category page URLs, we cannot redirect to category pages at this time.

Appendix: Implement the ZIP file method

The SEO Integration SDK supports the retrieval of search-friendly content for both cloud-based and file-system (ZIP) methods. In most cases, the cloud-based solution, explained previously in this guide, is easier to implement and more reliable in the long term. However, cloud-based solutions are not ideal for all systems. This appendix contains instructions for using the ZIP method of SEO integration.

Complete the following steps to use the ZIP method of SEO integration.

Note

This procedure uses the ZIP format of compression, which is standard for Windows. Alternatively, you can receive files in the GZIP format, which is standard for UNIX systems. If you want to use GZIP, go to the SEO Configuration page in the configuration hub and select the GZIP option for Compression Type. If you are not using the configuration hub, file a support ticket to use the GZIP format.

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1. Set up a daily process to download and decompress a ZIP file that contains the search-friendly content for your product pages.
 2. Ensure that the unzipped files are available via your web server's file system.
 3. Implement the SEO Integration SDK with the Internal File Path variable set to the location of the unzipped files. Refer to the *Implement Bazaarvoice SEO* section earlier in this guide for instructions on downloading and implementing the SDK in the server-side programming language you use.

Note

It is important that you update the ZIP file daily. Downloading and updating less frequently reduces the freshness of your website content to search engines, and therefore reduces the value of the SEO implementation.
