



MOST EFFECTIVE SEO STRATEGIES

THE KENTUCKY DERBY 2023

Every year, in collaboration with our partners, Fortis Media develops an SEO strategy in preparation for **Kentucky Derby**. This year was no different and for the 149th edition, our experts analyzed the market and prepared a plan to put in place 3 months before the Derby.

And the race was on. Until the exact 2 minutes that lasted the most important horse race of the year, our team was all eyes on the prize to achieve the best results possible for our client.

WHAT EXACTLY IS THE KENTUCKY DERBY?

If you are not familiarized with what the Kentucky Derby is exactly, let us explain.

The Kentucky Derby, also known as the **'Run of the Roses'** is an annual horse race that happens every first weekend of the month of May, in Louisville (Kentucky) for straight 149 editions.



The event is organized by Churchill Downs Inc., on the Churchill Downs racetrack. It is the first and the most important race of the Triple Crown of the sport, which includes also the Preakness in the middle of May and the Belmont Stakes in early June.

However, the race does not start only on the exact date that is scheduled. For horse racing trainers, owners, jockeys and all the Churchill Downs staff it starts before. A lot of preparation races, health checks on horses and track maintenance is part of the process that concludes with the most exciting 2 minutes of the year.

For us, here at Fortis Media, the process is no different.

Our team of SEO experts starts way before the Derby, planning ahead, making sure we avoid all the hurdles and that we are ready for unexpected situations.

So, did all this preparation achieved success in the 2023 edition? Let's find out.



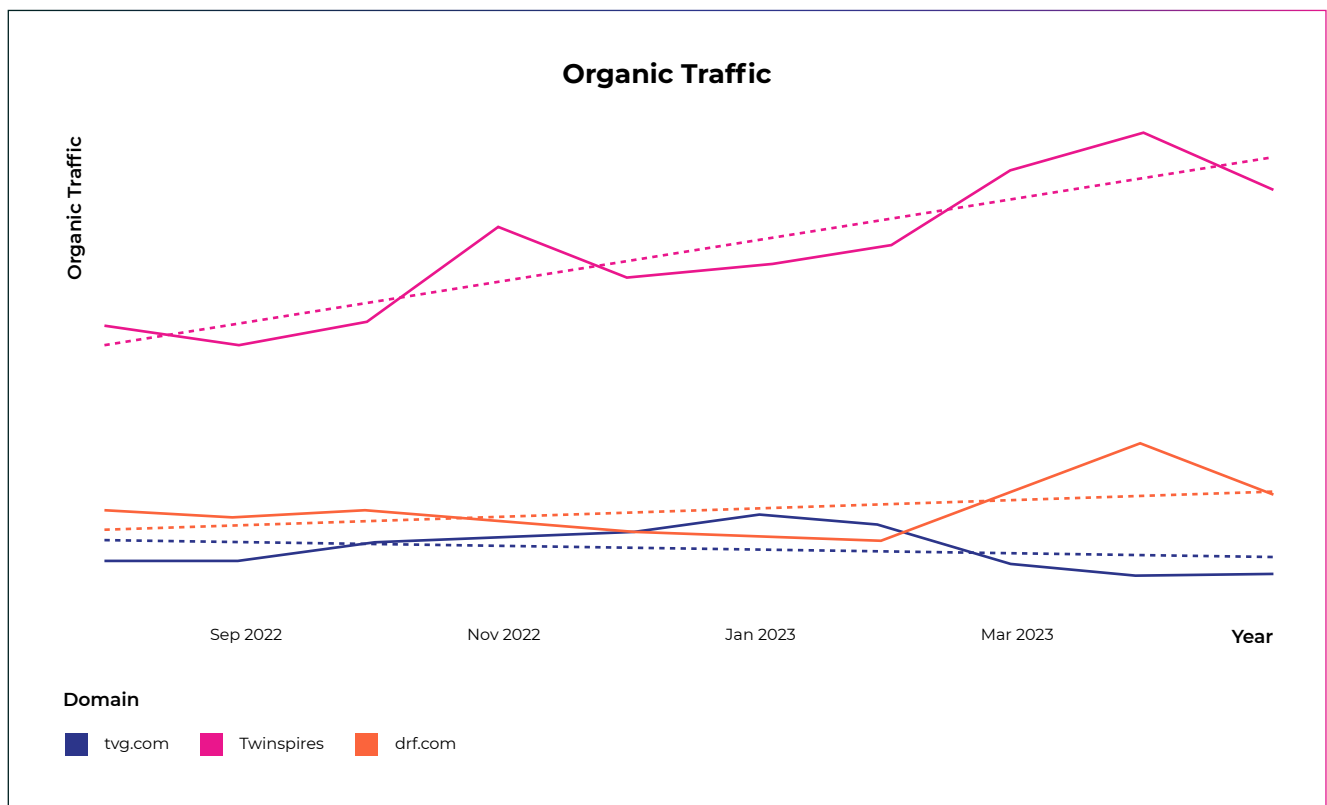
HOW TO MEASURE THE SUCCESS OF THE KENTUCKY DERBY 2023 SEO CAMPAIGN?

Before getting into the specific numbers to evaluate the Derby's SEO campaign it is important to refer what are the most important metrics for this matter.

- ◆ Of course, we measure our partner (and their competitors') **traffic** before and during Derby Day.
- ◆ Another metric to analyze is **visibility**, especially during Derby Day. This metric shows how visible the domain is among searchers for keywords in a specific keyword campaign.

ORGANIC TRAFFIC & VISIBILITY

In what concerns organic traffic, we analyzed the performance of three major brands in horse racing, seeing how they performed since September 2022 up to March 2023.



From the data above, collected through *AhRefs*, we can see that *TwinSpires.com*, *TVG.com* and *DRF.com* had similar behaviors in organic traffic.

This data demonstrates that, despite some spikes that are credited to their internal marketing strategies, all brands are commonly affected by the industry's oscillations in popularity.



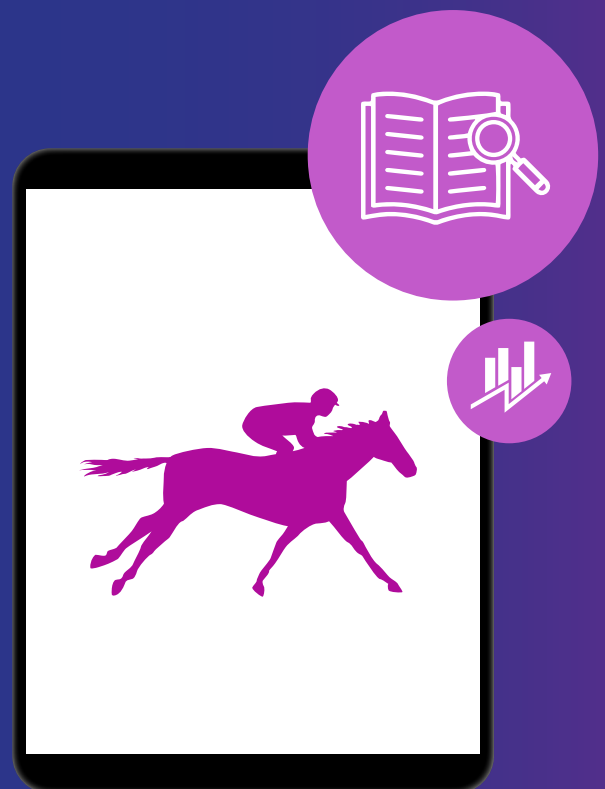
TwinSpires was able to overcome their competitors quite effectively towards the Kentucky Derby 2023 date.

7 SEO TIPS THAT WERE EFFECTIVE DURING KENTUCKY DERBY CAMPAIGNS

Our team worked hard during the months prior to the Kentucky Derby, up to the two-minute race. This meant keeping up with the SEO metrics minute by minute and taking action immediately when any decline was signaled.

That is why doing a **comprehensive SEO audit** to your page is so important.

The results showed that this SEO strategy was fruitful and today we share with you 7 reasons why the Derby campaign was successful. These tips can be applied to other niches and are also applicable for other businesses looking to push a specific scheduled event.



1 KEEP YOUR CONTENT FRESH AND UP-TO-DATE

Content freshness is an important Google ranking factor that search engines use to rank websites. It refers to how often you update your content, how relevant it is to your audience, and how well it matches the search intent.

Creating a content calendar is essential if you want to keep your content fresh and up to date. This involves planning out your **content in advance**, especially if you have a specific deadline in mind, as the case of the Kentucky Derby shows.



Another content format we used to improve TwinSpires rankings was **repurposing existing content**. This is a great way to keep your digital content up to date while minimizing the amount of work required.

- ◆ For example, we took old blog posts and turned them into infographics, which we then shared on social media, Discord and Reddit.

Finally, we focused on **evergreen content**. This is a type of content that is always relevant, no matter what time of the year it is.

- ◆ It's the perfect type of content that can stay fresh and up to date for a long time and the next Kentucky Derby, with minor updates, can be used again.
- ◆ Creating evergreen content is an effective way to keep your content fresh without having to update it continually. Examples of evergreen content include guides, tutorials, and industry insights.



2 TAKE ADVANTAGE OF GOOGLE SERP FEATURES

As a business, you already know how important it is to rank high on Google search results. It gives you a boost in visibility and ultimately leads to increased traffic to your website. However, simply ranking on the SERP is no longer enough.

Nowadays, Google is adding more features to its search results that can bring increased traffic to your site. But do you know how to fully take advantage of these Google SERP features?

By understanding different types of Google SERP features and how to find SERP feature opportunities, you can **optimize your content** for different types of Google searches and **increase your chances of winning** a Google SERP snippet.



Some examples of Google SERP features include an image carousel, video carousel, top stories, map pack, knowledge panel, People Also Ask, etc.

3 UPDATE EXISTING CONTENT, NOT JUST CREATE NEW

Updating and repurposing some of your most successful content pieces extends its lifespan so you can achieve the **best results over a longer period** of time (especially if it's evergreen content).



As we mentioned before, especially in the case of an event such as the Kentucky Derby, old pages can be updated year to year with up-to-date results, winners and records. You can also turn these old pages into videos or infographics, giving them a new life that can improve its shareability on social media.

Also, make sure to remove any outdated content from the front page of your website that's no longer relevant to your audience or is inaccurate.



4 ADD FAQ TO YOUR LANDING PAGES

If you know how important landing pages are to your site's success, you'll also know that including an FAQ (Frequently Asked Questions) section is an excellent way to improve your landing page's effectiveness.

When your potential customers land on your website, they are looking for **answers to their questions**. Adding an FAQ to your landing pages not only provides them with the answers they seek but also demonstrates your company's expertise, responsiveness, and customer focus.

- ◆ An FAQ offers an excellent opportunity to clarify any doubts or concerns about your products or services, ultimately building trust and credibility.
- ◆ The FAQ section helps you rank better in search results, as people search for exact questions on search engines quite often.
- ◆ A well-crafted FAQ can also improve your landing page's conversions rate. Potential customers who have their questions answered and concerns addressed in advance feel more confident when making a purchase. By providing them with the information they need in a clear and concise manner, you can keep your visitors engaged and interested in your offer, ultimately resulting in higher conversion rates.



5

ADD VISUAL CONTENT TO YOUR ARTICLES AND LANDING PAGES

It's no secret that quality content is crucial to engage and retain your target audience. However, not all types of content are created equal. In addition to the written word, visual content can grab your readers' attention and keep them engaged. Articles and landing pages with images, videos, or infographics tend to perform better than those without.

Images, videos, and infographics increase user engagement and help keep readers on the page longer. They also break up big blocks of text and make the content more visually appealing.

Quality visual content can **differentiate your brand** in a crowded digital space, and it's worth investing time and resources to get it right.



6

TAKE ADVANTAGE OF INTERNAL LINKING

To achieve your SEO goals, one of the most important aspects you should consider is the internal linking of your website.

Internal linking not only helps search engines index your website, but it also helps users navigate through your website and **improves user experience.**



Internal linking is still an important aspect of a whole SEO strategy. A good internal linking strategy ensures your website passes on great link equity, making it easier to promote and rank newer content.

Plus, search engines use internal linking to understand the structure of your website and decide which pages to index. They follow internal links to crawl your website and find new pages.

If any page isn't linked to any other page on your website, search engines may not discover it. Therefore, link relevant pages to each other to improve the visibility of your pages in search results.



7

REQUEST MANUAL INDEXING FOR TIME-SENSITIVE CONTENT

What is manual indexing? When you publish new content on your website, search engine bots will eventually find it and include it in search results. However, this can take anywhere from a few hours to several days, depending on how frequently the search engine crawls your website.

Manual indexing, on the other hand, is when you submit your website or specific pages to the search engine for immediate indexing. This is a useful tool for time-sensitive content such as news articles, event pages, sales pages, and product launches.

You can submit URLs directly to Google for indexing for time-sensitive content using the URL Inspection tool available in Google Search Console.

It still won't guarantee instant indexing, and you'll need some patience, but it's another way to convince Google to index and **rank** your content **faster**.



FINAL THOUGHTS

These are some of the strategies that Fortis Media applied during the past months to make sure the Kentucky Derby 149th was even more successful for our client than the past ones. SEO is a **never-ending process** of trying different methods and approaches to find out what works and what doesn't.

Therefore, we believe that not only did we help our client to improve the numbers and increase conversions compared to previous editions, but we also learned valuable lessons for the future. Finding out which content creates more engagement and receiving feedback from your **target audience** is fundamental, as it showcases what you can do better for next year.

We are certain at Fortis Media that Kentucky Derby 150th will be one to remember, not only because of such an iconic celebratory date but also because we will put all our efforts into making sure **our partner gets the exposure it deserves.**



**Book a free SEO audit today
and give your business also
the spotlight that it is worthy of.**

Book a free SEO audit



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