

PRACTICAL SEO

* Vol. 2 *

icba.org/mrc | ICBA Guidebook Series

Optimizing
Your Website





Welcome to our SEO guidebook series tailored for community banks.

We've worked with marketing experts and long-established search specialists to develop custom guidance to help community banks succeed in our specialized industry.

Our biggest goal was to fine-tune the most important parts of a basic program that allows you to implement the most crucial tactics first and start seeing gains fast.

We understand that SEO can seem complex, especially if you're not a tech expert. Don't worry - we've designed this guidebook series to be easy to understand and implement, even for those with no prior SEO experience.

The series is organized into short guidebooks that allow you to use as needed and at your own pace.

The goal is to help you improve your community bank's online visibility without overwhelming you with technical jargon or long processes.

We'll even show you how to set up some simple tracking reports that allow you to show the results of your work.

And through it all, you'll learn that search engine optimization is simply an iterative process that you or multiple teammates can work through together.



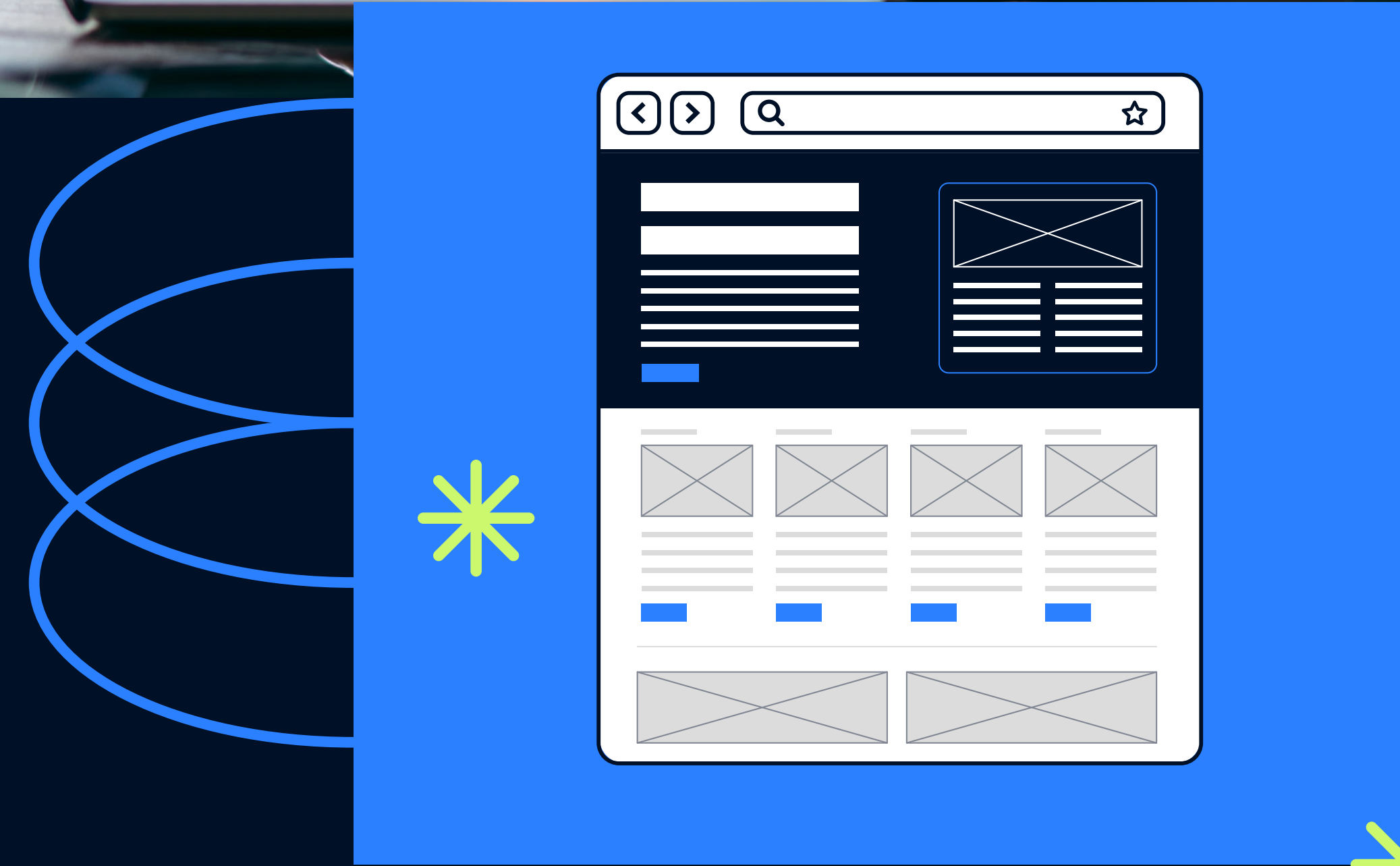


Optimizing Your Website

Remember when we talked about speaking your customers' language? Well, now it's time to put those words to work on your website. That's exactly what your website is for customers—a 24/7 branch that never closes and never takes a vacation.

But having a website isn't enough. We need to make sure your customers can find what they need, when they need it. It's like having a well-organized branch where everyone can easily find what they're looking for.

So, let's roll up our sleeves and get to work on making our virtual lobby as welcoming and easy to navigate as our physical branch.



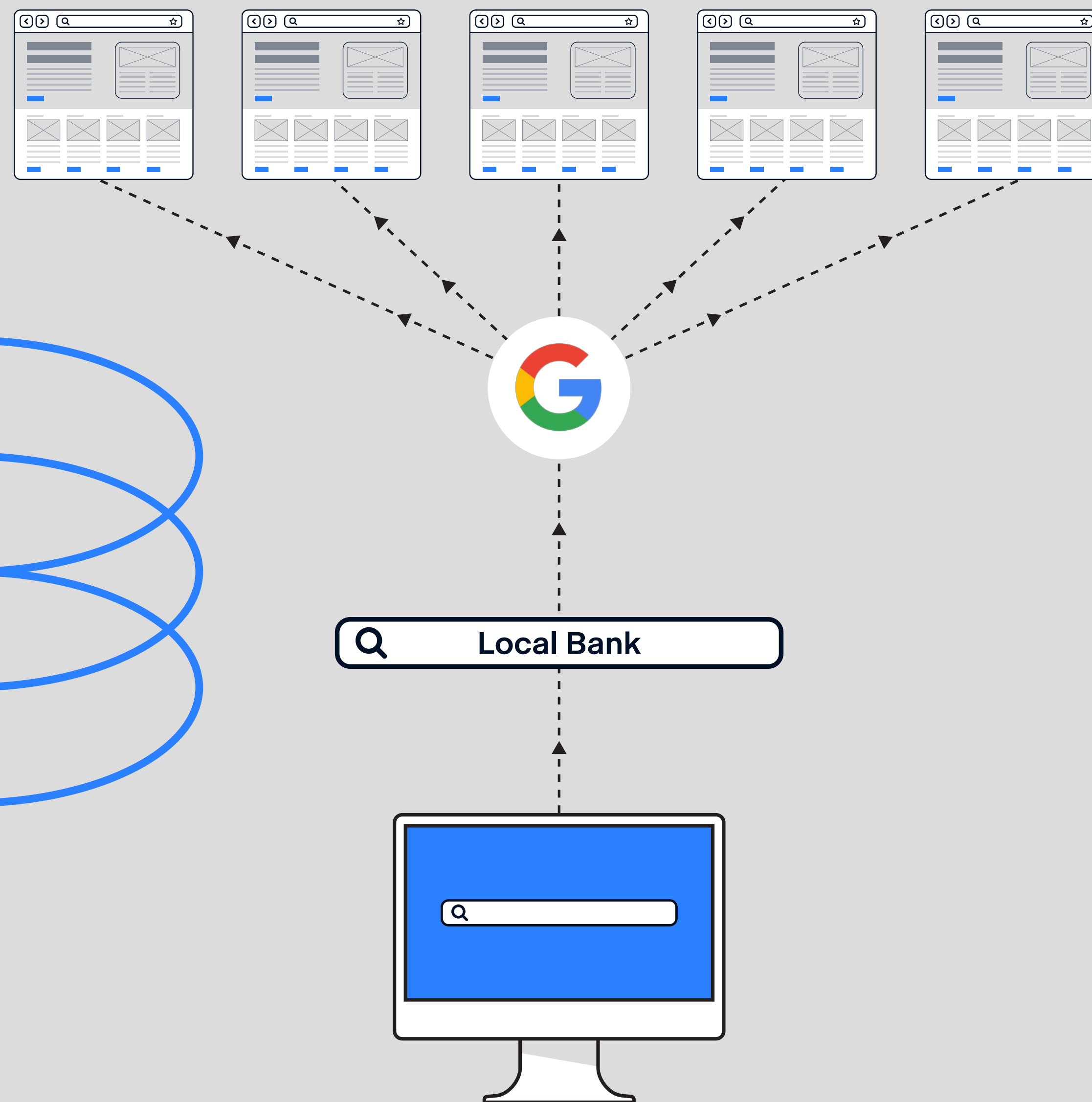
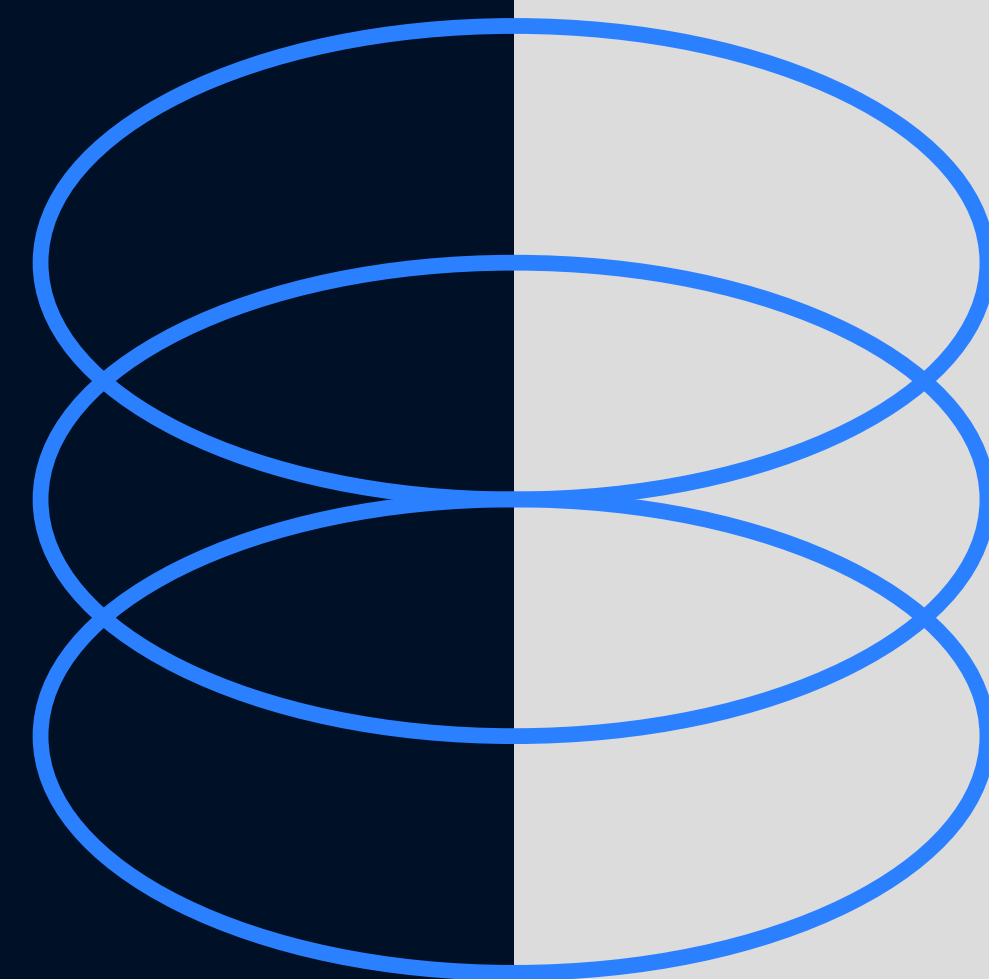
Meet Your Digital Greeter:

Search Engines

First things first, let's talk about your digital greeter - **the search engines**. Think of Google, Bing, and others as the friendly faces at your bank's entrance. They're the first point of contact for everyone. They guide potential customers to the right department on your website.

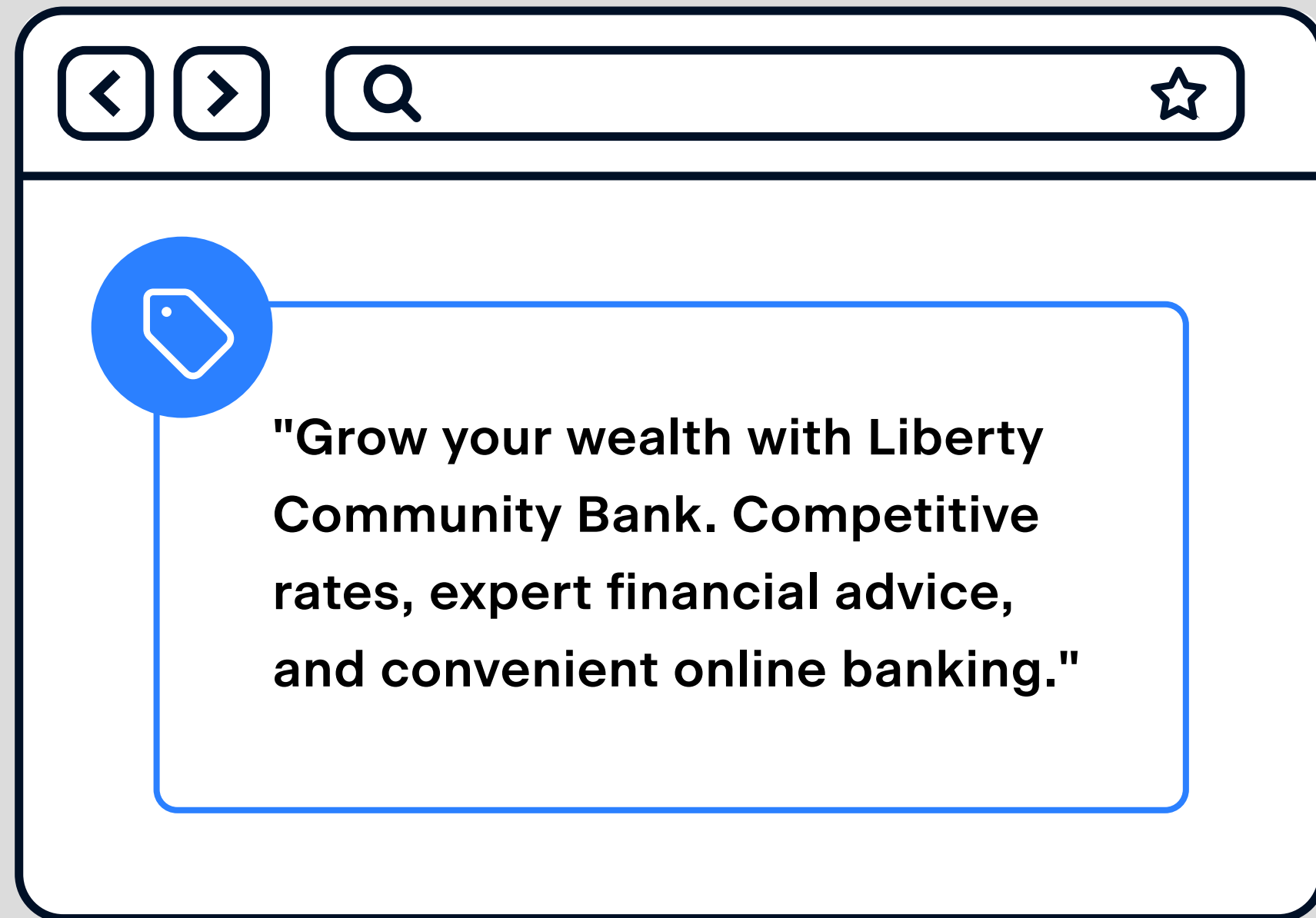
But here's the catch - we need to train these digital greeters. They appear smart, but we need to teach them what services we offer and on which website pages we do that. That's where some behind-the-scenes magic comes in.

Search engines have great memories, but they're not good at guessing. **They need us to train them with certain cues.** Not only do these cues help your customers, but they also signal to search engines what your pages are about. This helps your website appear in more relevant searches, potentially bringing more customers to your virtual lobby.



Meet Your Digital Greeter:

Behind-the-Scenes Elements



Meta Descriptions: Your Branch's Quick Overview

Imagine you had just 30 seconds to tell someone about a specific service your bank offers. That's essentially what a meta description is - a short summary that appears in search results. It's like the brief description in your bank's brochure that helps people decide if they want to visit.

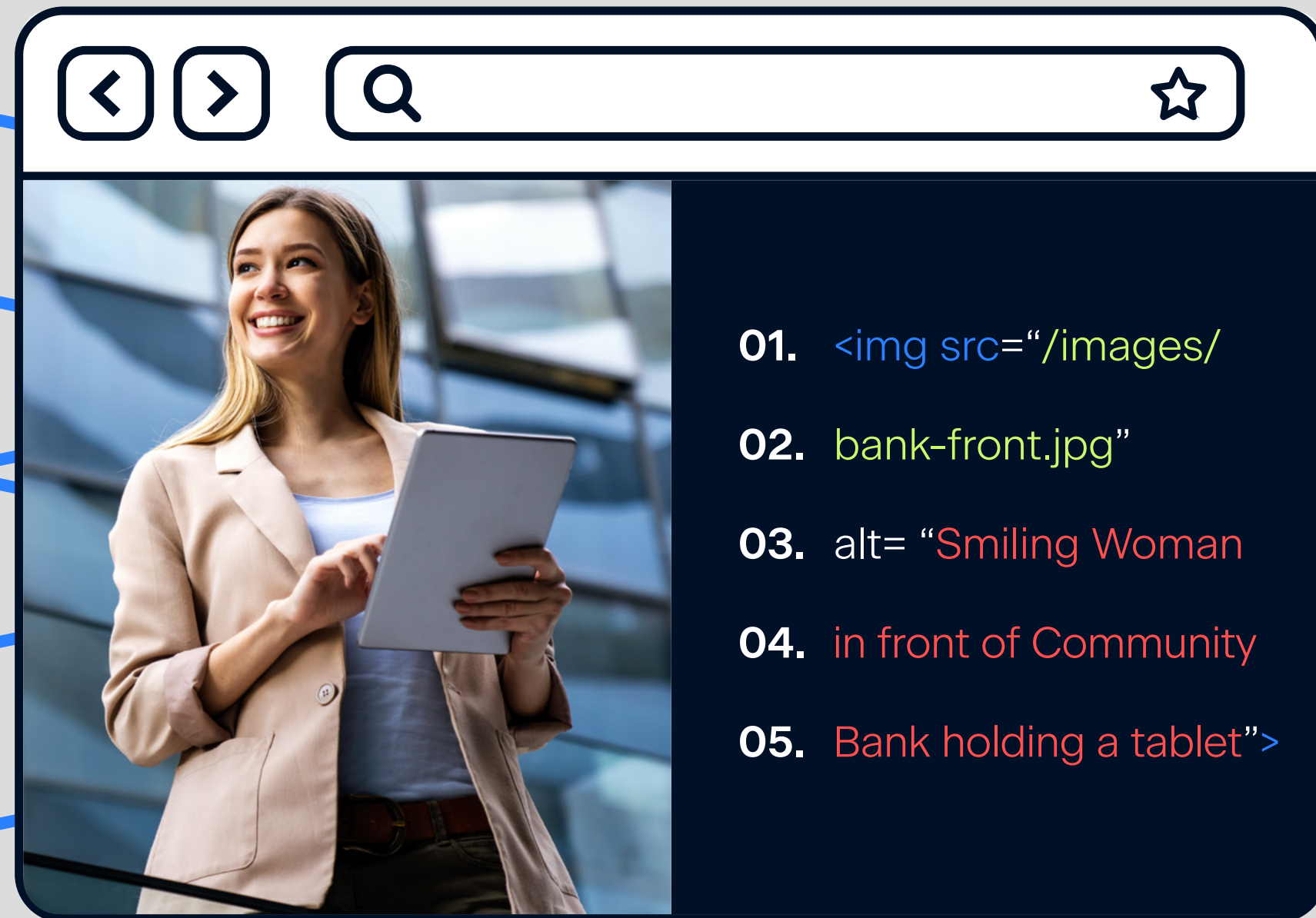
Here's how to write a great meta description:

- Keep it under 155-160 characters
- Use the keywords you identified in guidebook 1
- Make it compelling - give people a reason to click!
- Use a verb so that you can offer a strong call-to-action

For example, instead of "We offer checking accounts", try "Hassle-free checking with no minimum balance and free online bill pay. Open your account in just 10 minutes!"

Meet Your Digital Greeter:

Behind-the-Scenes Elements



Alt Tags: Describing Your Branch's Decor

Alt tags are like having someone describe the photos hanging in your lobby to a person who can't see them. They help visually impaired users and search engines understand what's in an image.

Here's how to write great alt tags:

- Be descriptive but concise
- Use relevant keywords naturally
- Actually describe the image - "bank logo" is better than "logo.jpg"

If you were being trained, "Happy couple shaking hands with banker at desk" is much better than "people in bank.png"

Search engines use the words you write in the meta description and the alt tags to understand what you want to convey to visitors, but you still need to direct them once they pass the greeter.

Setting Up Clear Signage:

Visible Elements for Visitors

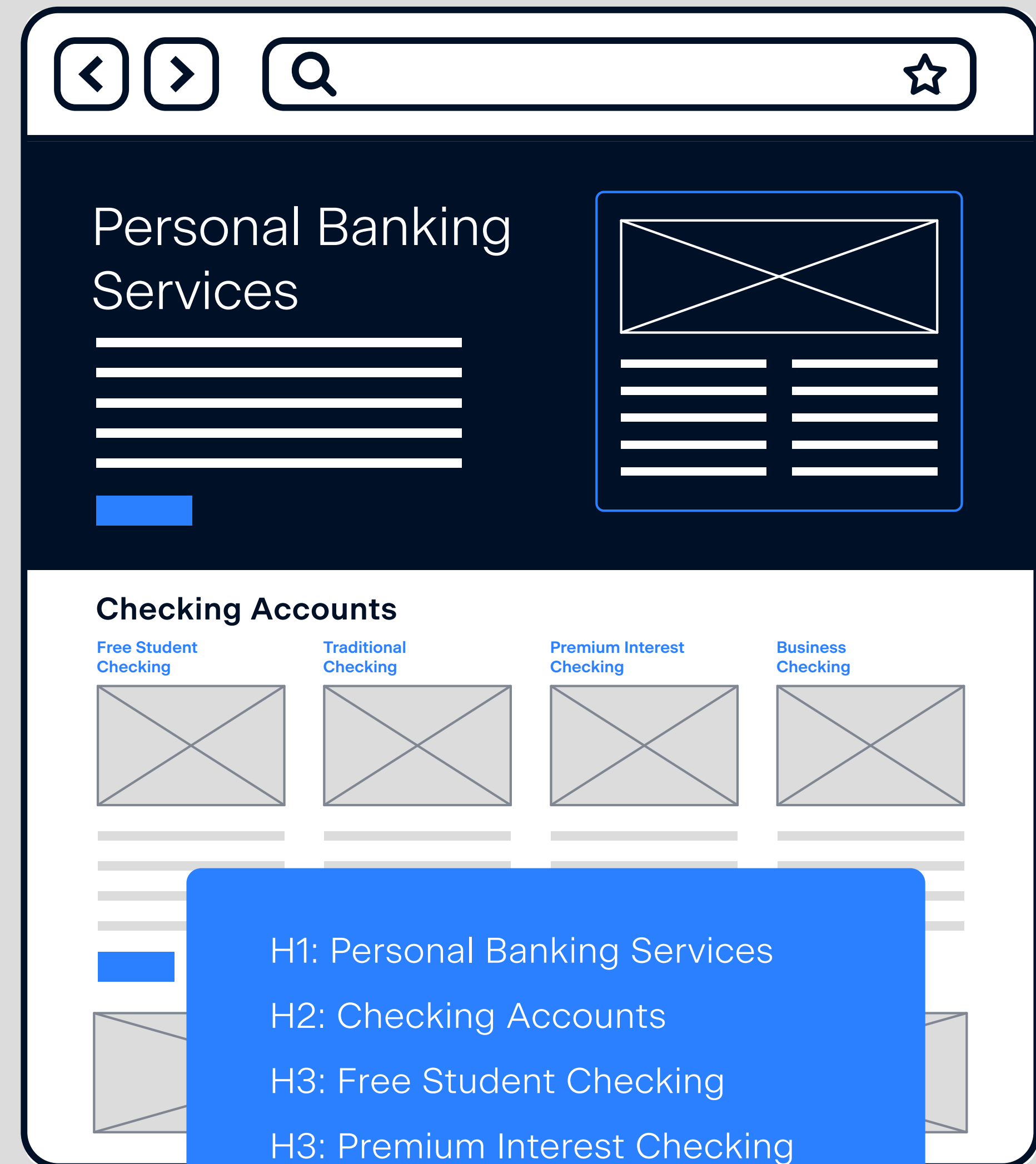
Now, let's talk about what your customers see when they arrive on your site - the headings. These are like the signs in your physical branch that help people find their way around.

Headers come in different sizes, styles, and colors, just like your bank has different signs:

- **H1 is your main sign - use it for your page title and only use one.**
- **H2 is like department signs - use it for main sections**
- **H3 and beyond are like signs for individual services, desks, or even nameplates.**

When using headers:

- Use your keywords, but make them sound natural
- Keep them clear and descriptive
- Maintain a logical structure - don't jump from H1 to H4!





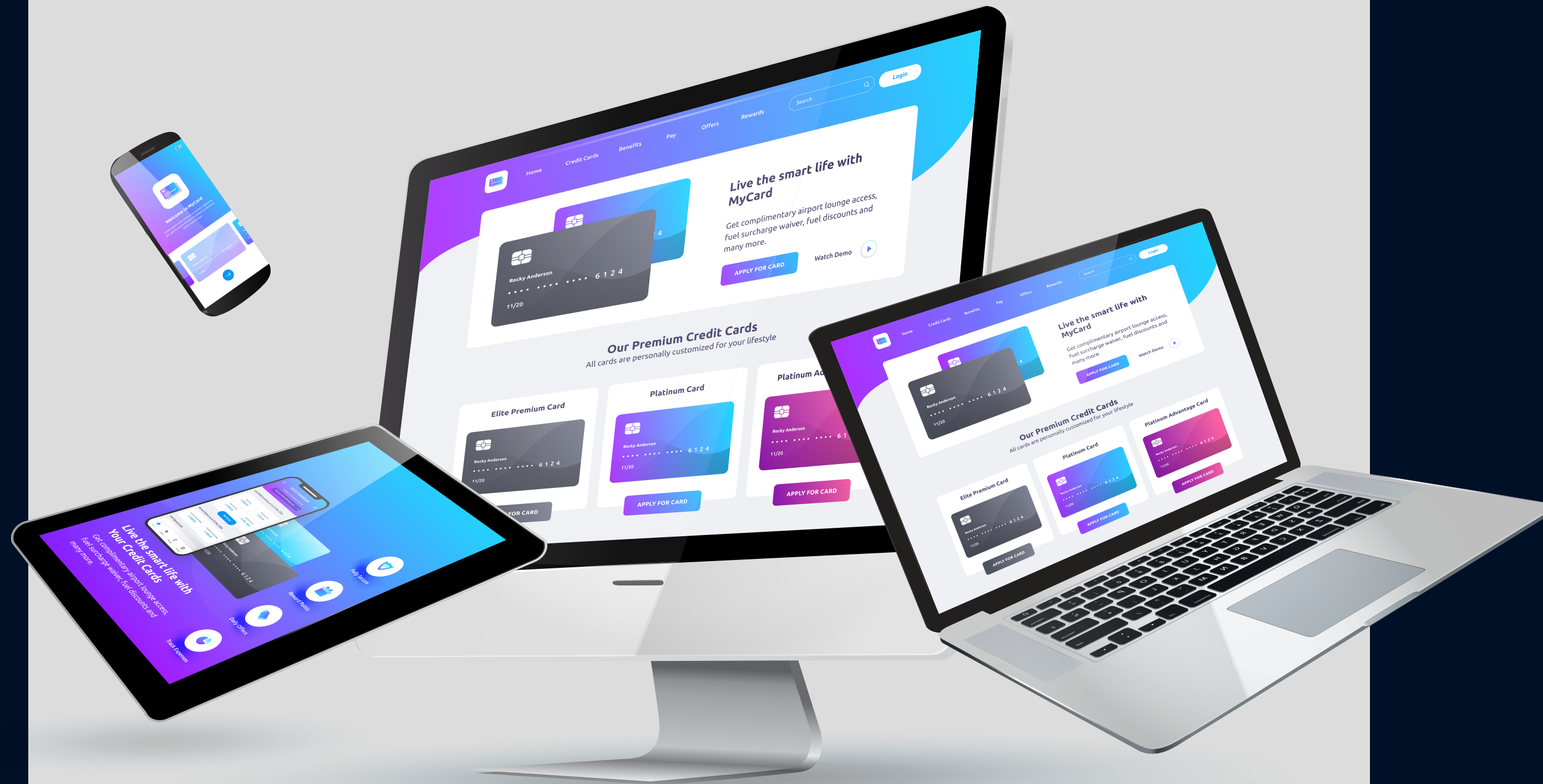
Putting It All Together: Optimizing Your Virtual Branch

By using meta descriptions, alt tags, and headers effectively, you're making your site more navigable for both your digital greeters (search engines) who then direct your actual customers to the best place on your site. It's like having a well-organized bank with clear signs and helpful staff - everyone can find what they need quickly and easily.



Remember:

You don't have to do this all at once. Start with your homepage and most important service pages, then work your way through the rest of your site.





Optimizing Your Website

* Checklist *

Write unique meta descriptions for your main pages

Add alt tags to all the images on those pages

Review your header structure and make sure it's clear and logical



Wrap-Up:

Welcoming More Visitors to Your Virtual Branch

You're now on your way to having a more welcoming, easy-to-navigate virtual lobby. By speaking your customers' language and providing clear signage, **you're making it easier for people to find and use your services online.**

Why not start by optimizing your homepage today? Even small changes can make a big difference in how welcoming your virtual lobby feels to both visitors and search engines.



Remember, optimizing your virtual lobby is about:

- Training your digital greeters with meta descriptions and alt tags
- Setting up clear signage with proper headers
- Speaking your customers' language throughout

Next up, we'll talk about the content on your pages. But for now, take some time to implement these changes. Your customers (and those helpful digital greeters) will thank you!



For the complete Practical SEO Guidebook Series,
or to learn more about how to help your
community bank flourish, visit:

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