

## Search Engine Optimization Made Easy

Recent statistics show eight out of 10 people surfing the Internet today, use search engines and directories to navigate their search. Search engines are web sites that provide relevant hyper links for search queries, for E.g. keywords or phrases that enable a search engine to find corresponding documents for the user. They use automated robots known as "spiders" to crawl through and index data out of web sites. Each search engine sets different parameters for the "spiders" and these differences are based on mathematical equations known as algorithms, which affect how sites are indexed and ranked. Directories are different than search engines because they are compiled lists of categories which have been manually edited.

Such is the popularity of these search engines and web directories that they are now considered powerful marketing tools capable of generating large amounts of traffic to your web site. Most web marketers now understand the importance of attaining top search engine placement and out of this realization were born various techniques to help get into the good books of search engines. All these techniques are commonly grouped under a heading called "Search Engine Optimization" (SEO) which has now become a very essential part of the armory of any Internet marketer.

Search Engine Optimization, in its simplest form, is the systematic process of submitting a domain name or URL to search engines and directories. It is the science of search as it relates to marketing on the web. Mostly technical in nature, it combines programming with business, persuasion, sales, and a love for competitive puzzle solving into a written form capable of maintaining desired revenue goals while achieving high rankings in the organic sections of search engine results pages. It is not just technical, or copywriting, nor links, or just search engine submission, but an intricate blend of over a hundred variables into the fabric of a website. It is difficult to accomplish without a formal proven methodology and strong proprietary tools. The objective of Search Engine Optimization is to increase web visitor counts by ranking very high in the results of searches using the most appropriate keywords describing the content of your site. This relative ranking is often viewed as a struggle to best use a few keywords, instead of a struggle to out-do your competition. There are no SEO secrets -- just ranking and promotion methodologies to follow in order to beat your competition in obtaining a high ranking for desired search keywords. Proper Search Engine Optimization requires that you beat your competition, so knowing the keywords and criterion used by your competition is the most important first step.

Many search engines rank sites according to the titles of the web pages and the keywords submitted. The titles should correlate with the keywords that the audience would most likely type in the query box of a search engine. Each page on the web site should have different titles based on specific keywords or phrases. A title should start with a keyword or phrase and it should not contain more than five to seven words. To increase the prominence of the keywords in your website, you might consider using the keywords in the title tags, Meta tags and also throughout your webpage. While creating the keywords for a website, one should keep in mind that the main objective of your marketing strategy is to convey the **right message to the right people**. Important pointers while building up your database of keywords are:

- Visualize yourself as a potential customer
- Organize your keywords into separate categories and lists
- Think of specific words that qualify your visitors
- Use every available tool to help you (i.e. software, thesaurus, etc.)

- Stay away from broad and unspecific keywords
- Never use trademark names of other companies
- Consider using words that are often misspelled

The next important component of websites during SEO is the Meta tag. These tags can be considered equivalent to the table of contents or a brief summary of a long article. Meta tags allow the developer to communicate specified information to search engines and convey to the search engine the name, description, and main keywords of your site. Most of the search engines recognize Meta tags, so it is important that proper keywords and descriptions are written, especially if a site lacks text. The Meta tag description should contain multiple keywords that flow in a logical and well organized sentence. To achieve the best rankings, place the keywords at the beginning of your description and keep them close together. The length of Meta tags varies according to the search engine's specification but it is always better to keep it under 250 characters.

Link popularity and doorway pages are other things that have to be taken into account. Link popularity is primarily measured by the number of links that other websites point to your website. However, the number of websites isn't as important as the quality of websites that link to you. One of best ways a website can attract large amounts of links to itself is to provide valuable and meaningful content. Doorway pages look the same as any page on the web site that are already published. The difference is in the data of the titles, Meta tags, and other phrases of description. Also known as Pointer pages, they offer a way for a site to target certain search engines and more importantly, target particular phrases. Doorway pages are created to help supplement the online marketing manager's search engine optimization plan.

Another way of getting your website to figure prominently on popular search pages is through paid placement. When a user makes a search query, the results that the search engine displays are called the "editorial lists" and cannot be bought or sold. On the other hand, all the copy around the regular lists is "payable" or free to be purchased. A few of the paid ranking options in the field are:

- Banner ads can be bought by businesses who want to advertise under target keyword phrases.
- Content Arrangements allow search engines' ability to promote the advertiser's content on a search results page
- Paid Placement can appear above, below, and along the sidebar of the editorial links.
- Paid Submissions are how search engines increase their revenue for charging the process of submitting URLs. Even though it doesn't guarantee a listing it does offer a quick review time set.

URL ranking results change week-to-week due to competition, so maintaining a top ranking requires constant keywords monitoring and information rework. Search Engine Optimization never rests, much like the competition. A basic step by step run down of the process of Search Engine Optimization is given below:

### **Step 1: Recognize your Competition**

You should keep track of any URL's that you happen to know are well ranked or your major competition. For that:

1. Visit the search engines directly to see specific results by typing in your keywords into the search field for each search engine and viewing their individual results pages.
2. Select Keywords that you expect surfers to use to locate your site, submit obvious keyword terms.
3. Then create a list of the top one to five site URL's that return from each search.

You will find that in a web-sized audience of billions of web pages, your competition will generally rank well in several search engines. True high rankings are achieved by having a first page ranking in most of these search engines for many keywords.

### **Step 2: Tract the links to your URL**

Link tracking allows you to identify and choose possible sites that you will want as link partners once your site is content-rich and optimized. If these sites link to your competition, then you want them to also link to you. This is also done so that these potential link partners can be checked for META keywords that might be related to your site and were missed by your competition. The number and authority of the links to your site is a factor in determining how well your site will rank with some search engines. Popularity with well respected sites is very beneficial.

### **Step 3: Zero-in on your Keywords**

It is critical to understand the search terms and keywords used to locate your website as a part of a search engine query. You need sample keywords used for search engine ranking, and some idea that your list is complete. It is far more important to rank well with many search criteria than to be number one with only one criterion.

Use different keyword patterns and titles for ALL of the major pages in your site, and submit each individual URL to get all of the different keywords and titles added to the search engine. The goal of Search Engine Optimization is to be found for many keyword searches, so have each page cater to different keywords. Meta tag "keywords" may work for some search engines like Yahoo!, while Google and many others emphasize content and titles. As a result, it is important to have the most common words also appear at the top and throughout your site if it can be done without hurting the appeal of the site.

### **Step 4: Repeat Steps 1 through 3 until you compile an exhaustive keywords list**

Be sure to mix-up the sequence of the keywords if appropriate, for example: 'word1 word2 word3' then 'word3 word1 word2' then 'word2 word3 word1'. Keep searching until you are satisfied that you have most of the keywords.

### **Step 5: Employ Frequency of Use and Acceptability to combine Keywords**

In your first attempt at compiling keywords, you will end up with hundreds of words that should be sorted by perceived descending order of importance. If uncertain, leave them in the order used by the highest rated pages. Identify two-word or three-word phrases if used, or if applicable. It is also important that you add words to help clarify the use of your keywords so that the index builders learn the context of your keywords and hence will help raise your search engine rankings. Each keyword in your Meta tags must also appear within your content to avoid spamming penalties. Also, consider common misspellings as additions to your keyword lists. For best results, the following Web publishing techniques should be avoided:

- Overuse or repetition of keywords
- Use of keywords that do not relate to the content of the site
- Use of fast Meta refresh
- Use of colored text on same-color background
- Duplication of pages with different URLs
- Use of different pages that bridge to the same

It is also important to discard potential keywords that are not likely to be used in a search if they do not contribute to your revenue. Properly done, you might end up with as few as ten or as many as a hundred major keywords. If you add all the words, it will dilute the importance of each keyword; so select well. You will have a hard time keeping the keyword analysis list short if you include plurals and various combinations of words to maximize your frequency counts. The last keyword should be your site identification taken from your URL.

### **Step 6: Pepper your Content with Keywords**

It is important that your page TITLE be as descriptive as possible of what you do and that it contain your top few keywords, but generally fewer than 12 words. Listings that include the dominant search terms in the Meta TITLE and Meta description tags have a higher ranking and a higher click through rate (often more than double the traffic) than those that do not. Use these keywords to make up your Search Engine Optimization targets. Also, review your content to add these keywords, especially two-word and three-word phrases, into the content without losing the message.

It takes a lot of words to convince a search engine that you are a subject matter expert. Avoid mistakes, use clean optimized graphics and do it right, minimize the use of flash, avoid pop-up windows, restrict the scope of forms except where really needed, make javascript and css files external to the source code, always use a site map, solve obvious problems first, and by all means keep it simple.

### **Step 7: Fine Tune your Keywords List**

Keyword tuning is an iterative loop until you rank reasonably well on several search engines. At that point you, at least, have the right words and a reasonable Meta keyword tag. But some search engines use different strings to determine keywords and their algorithms downplay or ignore Meta tags. These search engines extract keywords from the content on your page, so you need to place your best search words throughout the displayed content for your page. It is the mission of SEO to make the content worthy of high ranking by being more relevant and competent than your competition.

### **Step 8: Submit to major Search Engines**

Pace your search engine submissions, adding only up to five pages per day per site as a maximum, and not doing submission more than two or three times per week. The engines will regularly discard search engine submissions without processing them. By resubmitting, you have a higher probability of having one of your submissions "take". Also, some indexes appear to give preference to "fresh" submissions as determined by the date of last update and the last submission date. So you should update your site often following prescribed Search Engine Optimization tactics and resubmit at least twice per month.

Allow two to four weeks for each search engine submission to be indexed in each major search engine. If you do not show up, then resubmit. If you continue to miss the search engine rankings results you desire, then go back and review your keyword usage, either increasing or decreasing frequency until you have the desired results.

### **Step 9: Recheck your Search Engine Registration**

It may take a few weeks for accepted search engine submissions to actually become effective with the major search engine. In some cases, it may take several submissions before you get registered. Keep trying to get registered. Visit the search engine that you care about and see if you are registered by searching for your URL.

### **Step 10: Check Search Engine Placement**

Finally check the placement of your website on the search pages regularly and try and optimize its position by updating and balancing the keywords and content through trial and error.

After successfully placing your website on search pages, you need to keep track of the effectiveness of your efforts by tracking the visitors to the websites. This can be done by:

- Performing a log file analysis of all your search terms
- Analyzing and measuring the traffic that comes from search engines directories.
- Comparing the Meta tags with rankings of your competitors.

In most cases you will want to re submit your URLs, every few months with new updated Meta tags and titles. However, don't resubmit your URLs unless you have made changes, otherwise it will most likely hurt you more than help you.

Search Engine Optimization is an ever growing field. Each day throws up new possibilities and processes along with the changes in the Internet Technologies and World Wide Web. SEO has its own set of advantages and disadvantages:

- The upside of search engine optimization is that it is free and there is never ending information about it. Also, you will get good results-- especially if you personally submit your web site rather than pay a third party to submit your URL to a 100 of search engines all at once.
- The downside is that it is very time consuming and some search engines and directories take months to review and list a site that you submit. Also, there are no guarantees in getting or holding top placement on search results.

So it's finally up to the web marketers and the website owners to decide whether they want to make use of this newly emerging science in promoting their businesses and websites.

**Sources:**

<http://www.submit-it.com/subopt.htm>

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[http://www.bruceclay.com/web\\_rank.htm](http://www.bruceclay.com/web_rank.htm)