
Search Engine Optimization (SEO)

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Search engine optimization, SEO, is about creating a website in such a way that it will appear higher in the search rankings. SEO is aimed at achieving the highest position in the organic listings on the search engine results pages. SEO is very useful for driving visitors through targeting the high volume, low intent generic phrases. To do this you need to define a list of key phrases to work with. A website that's optimized for search engines can reap huge benefits on to the website and ultimately the core business. A key benefit of SEO is that it is relatively cost-effective since there is no payment to the search engines for being placed there.

SEO is a long-term strategy. To identify the correct investment requires a long-term cost/benefit analysis.

The data below shows the importance of results in the natural or organic listings - which gain between 60-80% of the clicks for a given search.

- 81.7% of users will start a new search if they can't find what they're looking for in the first 3 pages (typically 30 results).
- Over half of Internet users search at least once a day, while around half use search toolbars from one of the main providers, e.g. Google, Yahoo! Or MSN.
- 42% to 86% of websites are found through search engines.
- There are 300 million searches carried out per day, every day.

There are three main factors that determine the search engine ranking of a website:

- Site optimization
- Site popularity
- Link popularity

Site optimization is about placing the right keywords in the right places on a website and making the website accessible to search engines.

Site popularity can be achieved through online and offline marketing and through link popularity - the more websites that link to a website the more popular it will become.

The number of searches by people trying to find information is still growing dramatically. Nielsen/Net Ratings reported that there were 5.7 billion searches in the US in January 2007, a 39% year-on-year increase from 4.1 billion in January 2006. Furthermore, the number of searches in the US is more than 200 million per day.

SEO Quick Strategy

The motive of search engine optimization and submission is to attract targeted traffic by attaining very high positions in the search results using the most appropriate keywords relevant to the content of a website

The following six (6) steps form a guideline for increasing search engine rankings:

- Search Engine Optimization Strategy
- Identifying Competition/Related Websites
- Determining Target Keywords
- Design for the Search Engines
- Optimizing Page Content
- Link Popularity Building

Step One: Planning/Creating Search Engine Optimization Strategy

Strategies should be created for each market and each interactive property. Every property should be looked at differently; broken down by its core sections and core user audiences. The goal is to understand how users understand and find content on an industry specific website.

Step Two: Identifying Competition/Related Websites

Use the search engines to identify competitors. Search with the keywords that you expect users to use to locate your web site. The web sites that are ranked in the top positions are the competitors whom you have to beat to reach the top. This helps when trying to build links to your web site.

Step Three: Determining Target Keyword/Key Phrases

Effective keyword phrases are frequently searched for (high demand) but not being targeted by many other websites (low competition). There are three core tools out there that can help locate good keywords/phrases.

Word Tracker

Word tracker is one of the most essential SEO tool for keyword Selection and Research which will suggest hundreds of related phrases based on the number of users searching for it and the number of websites targeting it

Overture

Overture's search term suggestion tool is free and much quicker to use than Word tracker. It

works in much the same way as Word tracker but doesn't tell you how many websites are targeting each keyword phrase.

Google

Google Ad Words Keyword Suggestions tell you which keyword phrases are being targeted by other websites.

Keyword Discovery

Keyword Discovery [keyword research tool](#) offers a free trial and similar (monthly and yearly) subscription options like Word Tracker. Keyword Discovery has a much larger keyword database and provides historical data for the past 12 months for every keyword.

Step Four: Design for the Search Engines

Search engines scour the Internet looking for web pages to index, following links from one web page to the next. To ensure a search engine ranking, all pages on a website must be accessible to search engines.

Some search engines have problems with:

- Links accessible solely through frames, image maps, or JavaScript
- Very long pages
- Very short pages
- Flash pages
- Long JavaScript (JavaScript should be placed in an external document)
- Dynamic URLs

Step Five: Optimizing Content

The foremost criteria for a website to be able to attain and retain top search engine ranks for a long period of time is to have a great Content. In the world of search engine optimization, content is king! A real long-term solution, and one that adds significant value to a website, is to create first-rate content and give related websites a reason to link to a site directly.

Lack of Content can be Harmful

Quite simply, search engines love content - the more content there is on a page the easier it is for search engines to work out what the page is actually about. Search engines may struggle to work out the point of a web page with less than 250 words, ultimately penalizing that page in the search rankings.

Step Six: Link-ability/Popularity

Inbound links to a website play a significant part in determining its position in search engines. It's not just the quantity, but also the quality and click-through-rate of links to a website which is of importance.

The objective here is to get descriptive links on as many relevant and highly trafficked sites as possible. This is first done by getting on the large web directories (Yahoo!) and then the local industry specific directories. The next step is to identify and locate related websites (typically not direct competitors) to exchange links with.

Researching Your Keywords

This is one of the most important aspects of search engine optimization. There are many ways to do keyword research and a lot of complexities involved, but here is a simple look at the process:

The keyword phrase is the set of words a visitor types in when they query a search engine. It is important to note that search engines look for the exact keyword phrase typed in by the user when determining relevant results.

Therefore, changing the order of the words will bring up different results.

For example, Los Angeles web design brings up different results than web design Los Angeles. There's a lot to consider when choosing keywords; if you do everything else right, but optimize for the wrong keywords, you'll see few results.

So how do you do it correctly?

One, figure out which pages you want to optimize for and guess a bunch of phrases for each page. Think about which people you want to find your site. Make specific list of the different types of customers you want to bring to your site through the search engines.

Two, use a keyword research tool to determine exactly what phrases internet visitors are typing in, how many people (traffic) are searching for those words, and how many documents those keywords return.

Guess a few keyword phrases for each group. After your initial guess you'll want to do the research to figure out what people are actually typing in.

You can optimize different pages of your website for different keywords. SO you should research three to four different keyword phrases for each individual page of your website.

Third, analyze the quality of the competition and refine target keywords.

It is important to note that the depth of the search does not correspond to traffic levels. If you search Google for random white socks it brings up over three million documents. All three million documents are competing for the same results, or search engine rankings. But very few people actually type in random white socks; this is an example of a search with high depth, but low traffic, so this probably isn't a good keyword phrase to optimize for.

Also, think about the content on the pages and remember that optimizing a page for keywords that aren't directly related to the content of the individual page is considered spam and can get you penalized.

Try to ensure all the keyword phrases apply to the same subject or topic on each of the individual pages on your website. For example, don't try to optimize a single page for both dogs and computer equipment.

So Why SEO?

Because search engines provide huge amounts of potential traffic that can make your website successful. This results in increased sales, branding, and exposure. If done correctly, search engine optimization WORKS.

Websites that effectively implement an SEO strategy will see huge improvements in their search rankings and an increase in their bottom line.

The term SEO has become somewhat of a buzzword and is slowly changing to encompass many traditional Internet marketing tasks like pay per click ad campaigns, social media marketing, website design techniques and affiliate marketing strategies. This fusion of SEO and internet marketing strategy has given rise to such terms as search engine marketing, search engine advertising and a number of other similar labels.

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