

IS YOUR SITE OPTIMIZED?

SEO = search engine optimization. Good search results are essential to your site. Many people do not go beyond the first page of the results pages so you need to ensure that your site is search engine optimised or you won't get any traffic never mind the right sort of traffic – traffic that brings you business that is.



Organisations need to optimise their SEO (organic listings, general advertising and pay per click) to acquire more customers or members, sell more online and for many other reasons.

There are over 1 billion people with Internet access. Almost 800 million searches are conducted worldwide on the Internet every day. **A searcher is proactively requesting information. They are already looking for what you offer. They are a live prospect.**

Nearly 60% of users have a search engine of preference, but will use another engine if they're not satisfied with the results from the first engine. So, although users may give Google as their engine of preference, they may actually use another engine, such as Yahoo or MSN, for a significant percentage of their searches.

When looking at the search results page, most users look for a number of specific items, at least one of which must be present to capture a click through. These items include the key phrase in the title or description, product information and trusted brand names and vendors.

So what are the things you need to do to have a chance to rank well? As every search engine has a different "algorithm" (which just means a mathematical rule or procedure for solving a problem) and each "algorithm" has literally hundreds of inputs this may seem like an impossible question to answer. And to answer it with 100% accuracy is impossible but there are certain things that have a major effect that you must do just to stand a chance. The things that are very important in optimisation:



- **Search engine friendly website design.** Excessive use of design features that can cause problems for crawlers (such as flash, frames, and dynamic content) will negatively impact your search engine visibility, as will 'heavy' pages that do not call scripts etc. or pages that use languages (e.g. JavaScript) that search engines cannot read. Make sure that your site is technically sound and well built with plain English URLs rather than:

<http://www.myreallysillysitewithanextraordinarilylongandmeaninglessurl.com?omissionid=4D6BE5993FFF956660C27184A2F39E81.TC30a?frame=top>

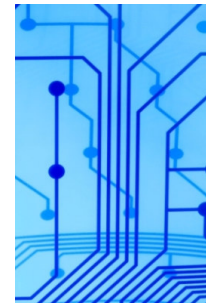
and with all "non HTML" code (HTML = Hypertext Markup Language and is the basic language used to write web pages) called in from separate directories.



- **Spider / Crawler friendly navigation.** Making sure a crawler can easily navigate your entire site. This is often accomplished by providing a secondary text-link navigation scheme or site map. Put up a site map which shows every page on the site and has a link to it. This will help the search engine robots find every page. If you are updating regularly then an XML site map for Google that "pings" Google about every update should be added too.

- **Choose keywords and phrases very carefully.** Keywords should be the words that customers actually use to find your site when using a search engine. Amazingly most people just ignore this basic fact and never get any research done on the subject!!! That's like turning up to the airport with no money, no ticket and no passport and expecting to get on a plane – in other words: nuts!
- **Optimize every page.** Once you know what keywords to use write a unique and compelling title for every web page and including target phrases in each page's title, description and keywords using simple language. Make sure that your keyword(s) or phrase(s) appear in each of your pages' "meta tags". Make sure that all your photos have descriptions. Every page must be optimized for one, two or at most three key search phrases. These are phrases that people actually use when searching for information related to that page. Make sure you optimize the page text with variations of the keyword or phrase to reach a keyword density of about 5 – 8% and about 300+ words per page minimum with paragraphs that use <H1> <H2> <H3> etc tags in their sub headings.

- **In bound links from important sites.** Links to your website from important sites (such as the most popular directories and other relevant sites) will boost your popularity ranking. Find a way to build up the relevant links to your site from other sites. Search engines view inbound links as a vote for your site. Therefore, in general, the more incoming links to relevant parts of your site from relevant "anchor text" (the visible text in a hyperlink you click to go to another page or website) on other sites the higher your page will rank, but the linking sites must be relevant and links from disreputable sites can harm your ranking.
- **Continually add new content.** Sites that continually add new content and new pages get better rankings because search engines like new relevant content. Search engines' "spiders" or "web crawlers" are a program that browses the World Wide Web in a methodical, automated manner. Web crawlers create a copy of all the visited pages for later





processing by a search engine that then indexes those pages to provide fast searches. Spiders are always on the lookout for fresh content.

- **Make sure you have basic management information.** How many visitors, where they go, where they leave etc. Arguably this is just as important as the site itself as it allows you to improve it based on actual results.
- **Finally – build a site for people that is interesting to people.** No point in being at the top of the search engines if people just refuse to stay or buy!!! People generally stay on sites that are relevant to what they are looking for at the time, are easy to navigate, easy to read and easy to buy from. Whilst they like “prettily designed” sites form tend to be less important than relevance and ease of use. They also like interacting via chat rooms or watching relevant “movies”.

Once a site is optimised it needs to be refreshed and changed and kept up to date. In general search engines like ‘new’ content so continuing optimisation is essential. Also, the optimised site can now serve as the basis for an effective Pay per Click campaign as it will have helped to generate the relevant keywords and phrases to be used.