

Simple Search Engine Optimisation

Search engines work by crawling, indexing, processing queries, and ranking results. The aim is to be amongst the search results which appear on the first page of the search engine results in the top ten positions. And, because Google enjoys the biggest market share, most benefit comes from ranking well in Google.

Unfortunately, the overwhelming majority of paid web designers are simply 'designers' who know how to make pretty pages - not how to build web sites which are SEO-based

Domain name

Choosing a good domain name is the first important step. Companies that specialize in a specific product or service and choose a domain name that is relevant to their product have an edge over a company, selling the same products, but with a name that does not reflect the product or brand.

Links

Everywhere you go on the Internet, you get to via a link. A link may either be text, or an image. Whenever you click on something that takes you somewhere else, you are clicking on a link.

The way you choose to design your site basically revolves around how you want to present your links, whether they are links to your products, to pages of information, or a link to your shopping cart so that people can buy things. The way you structure this can result in a website that ranks well or ranks poorly, and has a vast effect on how much traffic you will get to your site and how many sales you will make.

It isn't just people who use links to get around the Internet - the search engines use them, too. Search engines use automated programs called spiders or bots. The job of these programs is to 'crawl' through all of the links the Internet contains and then create an index of the pages and documents they discover in this process. Google, Yahoo!, MSN and other search engines are simply big indexes of pages that have been collected by the bots, as they crawled the web via the links they encountered on their journey.

Navigation

The design of a site should include a navigation menu, on the top or left side of all your webpages, that contain links that are titled using your most valuable keywords. This menu should be placed on each and every page of your website so that both human visitors and the bots can crawl from the homepage to all of the interior pages of the web site. As far as SEO is concerned, this is more important than your company logo, your color scheme or the quality of your product photos. A visitor to your web site should be able to get to anything he or she wants to within the website in as few clicks as possible. Your most important pages should be only one click away from the homepage. Pages of lesser importance might be 2 or 3 clicks away, but the goal is to make everything easy for people and bots to reach, with as few clicks as possible.

Keywords

Keywords are the words you use to describe your pages, products or services. If you sell Handmade Ceramic Vases, then 'Handmade Ceramic Vases' is your accurate, correct keyword phrase and is what you should use as the title in your navigation menu, and elsewhere on your website. 'Super, Awesome, #1, Fantastic, Holy Toledo', are not your keywords.

When keywords are used as a link (as in a menu, or somewhere in the text content of your page), the words are called 'Link Anchor Text'. Make the keywords/link anchor text in your menu completely specific. Deciding what to call the pages, products or services on your web site becomes a pretty exact science, because you are aiming to call these things exactly what the public will call them when they type an inquiry into a search engine search box.

Webpage design

Devote an individual Webpage to each product or service. This will allow you to optimize each page

individually for what it contains. The title of the page, the text on the page, can all be devoted to that individual subject, rather than 5 or 10 or 100 different subjects. This will result in a strong, keyword-oriented page for each product or service you offer, and your pages will stand a better chance of ranking well.

Sitemap

Another key place links should be on your site is on the sitemap page. This is a page you create which simply lists all the main sections or pages of your site, with links pointing to them. The sitemap provides a one-stop-page for the bots to visit to see what all the important links on your site are. Don't neglect to have a sitemap be a part of your web site. It's important.

Webpage structure

Every web page has 5 basic components that are important to Google's bots and search engine users. These 5 components are as follows:

- Title Tag
- Meta Description Tag
- Header Tags
- Alt Tags
- Text Copy

Title Tags announce your web page's purpose in a big, bold way!

To see what a title tag is, look up at the top of your browser. The title tag is in the very uppermost left of the screen. Anybody looking at this tag immediately gets the snapshot picture of what this page is going to be all about. In addition to this, the title tag gives the bots the same information, and it is very, very important. Neglect of title tags remains prevalent on the Internet, even amongst paid designers and it is one bit of your code that you don't want to miss! Take the time to write each title tag individually, for each page of your website. Optimize your title tags so that they include your most important keyword phrase pertaining to that page. Don't use gimmicky words like #1 or 'really great'. Those aren't keywords. Keep the title tag keyword-focused and descriptive.



Are Meta Tags important or not?

Undereducated web designers may not know what meta tags are. Scamming SEO companies tell you SEO is all about stuffing meta tags full of keywords. Here is some straight talk on meta tags.

The two main meta tags most commonly used are the Meta Description and the Meta Keywords tags. These tags are generally found in the top portion of the code of a web page. We believe that the Meta Description tag is very important, and that the Meta Keywords tag is of very minor importance. The main thing for you to understand is that Meta Tags Have Nothing To Do With Search Engine Rankings.

If an SEO company approaches you and tells you Meta Tags improve your search engine rankings, say goodbye and hang up the phone. This misconception is like the calling card of a bad SEO company. Yet, the meta description tag does serve an important role, when it comes to click through rate (the number of people who see your listing in the search engine results and click on it to visit your site). Because the

search engines frequently use the meta description as the second line of text in your listing, having a well-written, compelling tag may lead more people to choose to click on your listing, instead of someone else's.

Header tags

In the style of your website, you will be designating the font size of your header tags with the biggest being the H1 tag and then smaller tags being H2, H3, H4, etc. The basic principle is that header tags are used to emphasize the important main subject and then the sub-topics within that subject. The H1 tag is the subject of the page, so that is its main header. If I wanted to break up the rest of the page using further, smaller header tags, I could move on to use H2, H3, H4, etc. tags for lesser sub-topics. Header tags enable both the human visitor and the search engine bot to clearly understand the focus of your page.

Alt Tags

Images read as a blank to the search engines. However, you can include a little bit of information about your photos for them by the use of an 'alt' tag in the image link. Search engines are able to read alt tags, so you will be improving the quality of your site by always including alt tags in your image links.

Good SEO for your web pages requires that you individualize your title tags for each and every page to make the most of your important keywords. Good meta descriptions foster higher click through rates. And, good use of header tags will help to further clarify the focus of each page on your website. We are now ready to move on to one of the key aspects of creating web pages that are valued by the search engines: text content writing.

Text Copy

When writing copy for your website, stick to these guidelines:

- Be clear about the main focus of each page
- Write thoroughly about your subject
- Do use your keyword phrases, but in a natural, human-friendly manner
- Offer something unique

Summary

This guide is meant as a starting point so that you can understand the basics of SEO and can choose to develop your own site or use professional designers. If you have an existing website, I hope this guide has helped you to troubleshoot issues on your site that may be harming its value. If you are about to embark on becoming a web design and SEO expert, I hope you have gained some benefited from this guide and wish you the very best of luck.