

Search Engine Optimisation

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Overview

- What is Search Engine Optimisation?
- Why is it SEO important?
- Discuss the steps to take for SEO
 - General optimisation
 - robots.txt file
 - Meta-tags, keywords and semantics
 - Link popularity
 - Web statistics
- Look how a spider might interpret your website
- Discuss topics that affect Page Ranking
 - Flash
 - Javascript
 - Content layout
 - SES URL's
 - Excessive use of images
 - Keyword stuffing
 - Download speeds
- Resources

What is SEO?

- **Definition :-**
 - Search Engine Optimisation is the process taken to arrange a web site's content to obtain higher rankings in various search engines (both the site and individual pages), and includes tailoring on-page text (such as headlines and subtitles) as well as choosing the proper keywords for a page's meta tags.
- **Aim of SEO**
 - Obtain first page rankings
 - Generate clicks

Why is SEO important?

- Most users (90%+) use search engines to find what they are looking for
- Over 70% of online transactions start from a search engine result page
- You can reach your target market directly compared to ads
- More cost-effective than traditional marketing

Steps to take for SEO

- There are no rules that govern what should be done in order to make your website search engine friendly
- Search Engines continuously change the way they index and rank pages
 - Search engines (SE) govern how websites are optimised
 - Each SE does indexing and ranking differently
- However, there are a couple of general optimisation techniques to follow

General Optimisation

- A valid robots.txt file
 - SEO starts with the actual indexing of your website
 - A robots.txt file tells the spider what it is allowed to index
 - There is no guarantee that a spider will follow the robots.txt file
- Make the <title> and <meta> tags work for you
 - Ensure that they describe in short the content of the page.
 - Ensure that the keywords you choose are specific to the actual page content and not for the entire website
 - Ensure that the content uses proper HTML tags to divide the content (<H1>, <H2>, <H3>, <p>)
- Obtain links from other relevant websites to yours
 - Search engines believe that if other websites link to you, then your content is relevant
- Create a sitemap of your entire website structure
 - This will help the spider to understand the layout and structure of your website
- Monitor your website statistics to check if your keywords are working
 - Check where the highest referrals are coming from

A discussion with Google

- You typed your keywords in the Google search bar but your website is not there. This is most likely what transpired when the googlebot visited your website

Googlebot: (raises a harried eyebrow and looks annoyed)

Where shall I begin? First of all, your code is a mess. You have more lines of code than actual text and so many nested tables it makes my head spin.

Your home page has a keyword density of 24 percent, which is suspiciously high compared with the top-ranking sites in my database, all of which average about seven percent. Are you keyword stuffing? You know I don't like doorway pages!

You only have 12 backlinks going to your home page that I recognize, and six of them are from within your domain. The top ten sites have an average of 300 backlinks in *my* database and literally thousands of backlinks in Yahoo and MSN (not that I care about those hacks). I've slapped you with a duplicate content penalty because I noticed that www.anysite.com has the same exact home page copy as you. Don't look so surprised - I don't care whose fault it is! On average, your site is 60 percent slower to download than every other site in my database and all your dynamic URLs are giving me a headache. Honestly, do you really need so many variables?

You don't have a site map so I can't easily crawl through the pages of your site, and all of your navigation is represented in images without meaningful ALT tags, so I don't know where I am when I click away from the home page. Your link partners are abysmal - they are not contextually relevant (which makes me suspicious) and you repeat the same exact words in the linking text, which makes me think you're doing automated link swapping. I've been here three times in the past month and your content has not been refreshed once. I can't be bothered with you and your stale, over-optimized content. I will be back to crawl you again sometime this century.

Topics that affect Page Ranking

- Macromedia Flash
 - Flash provides a good user experience and can certainly increase sales
 - People are very visually stimulated
 - Some search engines do not index flash content
 - Tips:
 - Try to have a HTML and Flash version of your website
 - Use the Macromedia Search Engine SDK
 - Use anchor text properly
 - Use accessibility features in Macromedia's Studio MX to enhance the Flash. This will help accessibility readers purvey the content to visitors that rely upon the options in their browsers.
 - Make sure Flash links point to HTML pages, not other Flash pages. While the ability of a search engine to follow links in Flash is improving, it may not index content if the link just points to another Flash page.
 - Use static text in a Flash movie, so that these instances are not duplicated, and then are perceived as spam.
 - Recommend to the Flash developer that he use motion tweening as much as possible. Tweening is a term that comes from "in between". Motion tweening is used when an animation occurs between two keyframes, and the Flash application creates all the frames in between. This also reduces the occurrence of duplicate text.

Topics that affect Page Ranking

- Javascript
 - JavaScript can provide functionality and interactivity to a web site like no other scripting language can.
 - Its major drawback is that spiders do not understand it
 - Do not use javascript for:
 - Menu systems
 - Links
 - Tips:
 - Add navigation links between `<noscript>` tags
 - Have a textual sitemap
 - Offload your javascript to a separate file
 - It decreases your keyword density

Topics that affect Page Ranking

- Content layout

- The manner in which you layout your content is very important
 - Extensive nested tables are frowned upon by spiders
 - Try to steer away from excessive use of CSS and use proper HTML tags to divide the content
 - Words placed between `<H?>` tags have more precedence than text that is not
 - Do not try to overdo it as SE's check if the content below is relevant
 - Divide content that relates to a particular topic between `<p>` tags.
 - The paragraph might be shown as a description on the result page
 - Try not to mix non-related topics in the same paragraph

Topics that affect Page Ranking

- Search Engine Safe (SES) URL's
 - Most websites today are database driven and are therefore dynamic.
 - This means that most links contain query data that tells the page what to display (e.g.. News.cfm?id=1)
 - These pages do not have high rankings compared to static URL's that are more descriptive
 - Tips:
 - Use URL's that are more descriptive (news.cfm/seo-is-great/index.htm)
 - Lose the '?'. Some SE's discard everything after the '?'

Topics that affect Page Ranking

- Excessive use of images
 - Do not use too many images without specifying the purpose within the ALT attribute
- Keyword stuffing
 - Be cautious when choosing your keywords and be aware of the keyword density for a page
- Download speeds
 - Websites that are slower than competitors end to have lower rankings and click-through's

Summary

- SEO is a very important component in the marketing strategy of a website
- SEO requires an understanding of the customer and what his/her needs are
- Many factors influence your SEO strategy and depends heavily on the type of website you have (HTML, Javascript, Flash)
- SEO is an ongoing exercise as SE's change their indexing and ranking algorithms constantly

Online Resources

- SEO Chat

<http://www.seochat.com>

- SEO Consultants

<http://www.seoconsultants.com>

- Google

<http://www.google.com>

- Yahoo

<http://www.yahoo.com>

- MSN

<http://www.msn.com>

Books

- **Don't Make Me Think: A Common Sense Approach to Web Usability (R300-350)**
 - ISBN: 0321344758