

Search Engine Optimisation: What Every Company Needs to Know

Internet search engines exist to organise the overwhelming amount of information available on the web. They direct people to pages that are relevant to their searches, pages that discuss the exact keywords they are looking for. Customers in search of a particular product or service often choose companies listed on the first page of search results, and rarely continue searching past the second page. For a business that receives the majority of its clientele from search engines, search engine rankings can make or break an e-commerce company. Here we discuss specific search engine techniques that will help you to bring more traffic to your site and more business to your company.

Search Engines

Search engine optimisation (SEO) is the marketing technique of enhancing a website and its content in order to increase the chances of achieving a high rank on search engine result pages (SERP) under relevant keyword searches.

Search engines are very secretive about their criteria and ranking system-- they continuously update and revise their algorithms (a mathematical formula used to determine which web pages are displayed in search results). This way, there is less likelihood of webmasters and search engine optimisers using manipulation and spamming to achieve higher rankings.

Each search engine has its own formula and criteria for indexing and ranking pages. One can analyse SERPs and backward links (all the links pointing at a particular web page) and attempt to determine a search engine's indexing criteria, however, there is a lot of risk involved in relying on a limited number of optimisation techniques.

Because of the unpredictable nature of search engines, a website can easily move from a top ranking position on a SERP down to the third or fourth SERP or even banned from the search engine altogether.

The Issue of Trust

There are many unethical SEO companies that claim to be able to offer your website top rankings. However, by using aggressive marketing techniques to manipulate search engine results they give the industry a bad name.

The main problem with SEO companies is that they base their methods and techniques on research, trial and error, and speculation. As a result of the secretive

indexing criteria of search engines, webmasters and SEO companies can only make an educated guess about the ranking systems and possible algorithm revisions.

While SEO companies may be able to achieve high rankings on search engines for your website, it is important to keep in mind that the way they do it is precarious and requires a great deal of caution.

Some SEO companies may use 'black hat', techniques to manipulate search engine results to their advantage. These techniques are high risk or illegal and can get a site banned from search engines. Black hat techniques can cause severe damage to the business of an e-commerce company.

A few examples of 'black hat' techniques:

- ? Hidden text/hidden links: stuffing your pages with keywords or links too small to read or the same color as the background, so viewers are unable to see any difference in the aesthetics of the page.
- ? Cloaking: using browser/bot sniffers to serve the search engine spiders a different page than the page visitors see. It is used to show an optimized page to the search engines and a different page to viewers.
- ? Multiple submissions: submitting your domain and pages to search engines, for example submitting <http://www.logobee.com> and <http://www.logobee.com/samples> as two separate urls.
- ? Link farms: sites created solely for the purpose of search engine ranking. These sites are nothing more than random links which have no relevance to one another.
- ? Selling PR: sites that sell their high PR links for a fee through direct advertisement and for the sole purpose of increasing link popularity.
- ? Doorways: having one page stuffed with keywords that re-direct to another more user friendly page.
- ? Meta tag abuse: having too many keywords in the meta tag description, title and keywords.

Not all SEO companies use 'black hat' techniques, there are some that use safe techniques, however relying on an SEO company to achieve top rankings for your website is a gamble.

As Easy As ABC

You don't have to be a computer genius to achieve higher search engine rankings **for** your website. Effective search engine optimisation can be done by anyone who has the time and determination. There exists hordes of information, suggestions, ideas, methods and techniques about successfully optimizing your website for search engines. SEO companies do not use any 'special' tactics that we don't already know or that we can't easily research on the internet.

Safe SEO techniques:

- ? **Content:** Add valuable and relevant content to your site. The more content the better. Keep your paragraphs brief and to the point.
- ? **Continuously update your website:** Add new information and new pages to your site. Create a section on your home page containing up-to-date news items relevant to your business.
- ? **Link popularity:** Participate in link exchanges that are relevant to your business or that compliment your business. The more inbound links, the more important your website is perceived to be by the search engine spiders. Progressively build your links. Do not add 500 links to your site at one time.
- ? **Site maps:** Include a site map on your site. Site maps can help your visitors easily surf your site.
- ? **Meta tags and Alt tags:** Meta tags contain information about the website, placed in the HTML header of a web page, that is not visible to browsers. The most common meta tags relevant to search engines are title, keyword and description tags. Title tags are the most important tags because they contain the information that a viewer sees concerning your website on a search engine results page. Choose a title that clearly represents your business. Make sure that your all your tags contain relevant keywords. Alt tags describe the graphical elements in a web page.
- ? **Header tags:** Header tags (H1, H2, H3....) are tags used to represent headers and important titles. Use H1 tags for the most important headers, H2 for the next,

etc...As well, use bold, italics, underlining, and different font sizes. Spiders and bots give high value to sites that contain a variety of text and font sizes.

- ? Keep it simple: Make your site simple and user friendly. Make your site easy to surf, eye-catching, informative and interesting. Keep in mind that surfers have a short attention span.
- ? Stay away from large images and Flash images. Spiders have a preference for html text sites.
- ? Keyword density: Keywords should exist in your title tag, headline tag, description tag and throughout the content of your home page as well as other internal pages. Be careful not to over do it though.
- ? Informative and authoritative: Include authoritative articles pertaining to the topic of your business, FAQ, tips, how-to's, etc..
- ? Participate in SEO and webmaster forums to keep up to date on SEO techniques and search engine criteria revisions. Read websites and articles on various SEO suggestions.
- ? For other safe optimisation techniques see Google's [guidelines for webmasters](http://www.google.com/webmasters/guidelines.html) (<http://www.google.com/webmasters/guidelines.html>).

There are SEO companies by the dozen, attempting to lure you in, convincing you to believe that they, and they alone, can help you attain top ranking results on search engines. If you are considering whether you should use an SEO company or not, you may want to do some research on the SEO industry. You can find some helpful information at <http://www.google.com/webmasters/seo.html>.

That said, instead of spending big bucks to achieve these results, consider coming up with your own strategies to increase your search engine rankings. Don't spend endless hours worrying about search engine results and crawling spiders. While keeping in mind basic SEO techniques, you will be much better off customising your web site for your human users and not for spiders and bots.