

Design your web site to get registered with search engines

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By Jeff Gilman

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The truth is there are only a few positions at the top of a list of search engine results and getting to the top is not easy, guaranteed, or dependable. With one exception - pay for it - but more on that later. Let me explain how search engines work because meeting their expectations is what the really important stuff is all about.

First, there are 4 major players in the answer-a-search biz. Microsoft has about 24 million unique users, Yahoo and AOL each with about 20 million, and Google with about 10 million. Throw in Netscape and you reach about 100 million people. All the other engines are just chump change. If you can get properly placed on these engines you are in front of most potential customers and can look forward to an early retirement. Knowing what these engines look for is the key to getting registered and found.

These engines get their listings in a couple of different ways. You may submit your site directly to them, you may pay them for an enhanced listing, and/or you may pay for a third party service that pays for, or is paid for, space on the engine's result listings. The below table explains the various services and fees from the big engines.

Free Listings Provided By  
Enhanced Listing for Fee Provided By  
Third Party Listings Come From

Microsoft

[www.msn.com](http://www.msn.com)

Commercial sites may be submitted at no charge for inclusion in the Web Pages section of MSN Search. Sites in the Web Pages section will be ranked below sites that are submitted via the paid submission service and will not be included in the MSN directory. There is no guarantee of acceptance or turnaround time for these submissions.

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Listings provided by Look Smart  
Same as enhanced

Yahoo

[www.yahoo.com](http://www.yahoo.com)

Yahoo! does not charge for any listings in the Yahoo! Directory. Yahoo! only charges for expedited reviews of web sites submitted for inclusion.

Yahoo! Express (expedited review) is part of a suite of services that Yahoo! created to service small business needs.

Sponsor Matches are paid listings provided by Overture Services, Inc.

AOL

[www.aol.com](http://www.aol.com)

AOL Search is a hierarchical Web directory, organized by subject. All user-submitted Web content is maintained by the Open Directory Project (<http://www.dmoz.org>). The Open Directory Project is run by a staff of volunteer editors who choose to evaluate and classify Web sites in one or more categories. The editor exercises the option of choosing to add a site, moving sites between categories and creating new sites.

Google

Open Directory Project

Google

[www.google.com](http://www.google.com)

Only the top-level page from a host is necessary; you do not need to submit each individual page. The crawler, Googlebot, will be able to find the rest. Google updates its index on a regular basis, so updated or outdated link submissions are not necessary. Dead links will 'fade out' of our index on our next crawl when we update our entire index.

Google

None

Netscape

[www.netscape.com](http://www.netscape.com)

AOL Search is a hierarchical Web directory, organized by subject. All user-submitted Web content is maintained by the Open Directory Project (<http://www.dmoz.org>). [Same as AOL]

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AOL  
AOL

When your URL comes to the attention of one of these engines they will come and visit you. Yahoo sends live paid people. Open Directory uses volunteers. Others use web crawlers or spiders to crawl around your web site and this is important because spiders are the other way you get registered - automatically and without having to ask for it. It is perfectly possible to get a listing merely because your URL is on a site visited by a spider. This, by the way, is one of the reasons you want links to you on other sites. Regardless of how they visit you, all engines are all seeking to classify you. Whether you like being labeled or not, they must label you in a meaningful fashion.

The volunteers, spiders, flunkies, and even paid submitters do this with descriptions and key words contained on your site. And they find these key words and descriptions in two places - meta tags and text on the web pages themselves. So you need to have both.

Meta tags (meta is Greek for denoting position - which is probably fair because this sounds like Greek to most people) are computer codes buried in the HTML text of a web page. They aren't visible on a web page but can often be seen by viewing the source code of a web page. To see source code, click on a web page - not the graphic stuff but some text or a blank area - with the right hand mouse button and select View Source. The tags are at the top of the page and look like this:

Marketing for Idiots: Bulk Email blasters, Internet PR books and Web Site Templates.

Importantly, you can visit your competition and see how **THEY** promote themselves by seeing **THEIR** meta tags. You should do this with your competitor's web sites. You can learn a lot about what works by looking at what has worked. The two above tags and the title are where engines get their key words and descriptions.

The keen observer might say that there is a lot of redundancy in these tags and title. The words marketing, public relations, and mail blasters are repeated over and over. Is the author simple? Was his last job with the Department of Redundancy Department? He may very well be and it probably was. But the search engine spiders and flunkies are even simpler. They only know what is important if you tell them - repeatedly. And then tell them again. Redundancy is a very good thing at this point. So work some redundancy into your tags and title.

Not all spiders and flunkies read the meta tags and HTML code. Some read the text on your web pages. What is important is they use rules about what is significant and what to read. First, they read the title at the top of the page and figure that is what you are. Imagine for example's sake you are a veterinarian and you own Dr. Bob's Clinic. Doctor and Clinic are words that will register - but they won't help you very much. People who look for veterinarians on a search engine will probably do a search for 'vet', 'veterinarian', 'veterinarian' + 'city', etc. Therefore, to get placed to answer these searches, Dr. Bob should change the title on his web site to 'Veterinary Clinic of Palm Beach. So spend a lot of time on the title.

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Spiders also look at the text at the top of the page to see what you do. And like you and I, they tend to lose interest after the first paragraph. So spend a lot of time on that first bit of text. And repeat yourself. And then repeat yourself again. And keep hammering those key words into the text. Again, if you were Doctor Bob, you would want your first paragraph to include key words in the following way: 'Dr. Bob Clump, Palm Beach Veterinarian, specialist in pet medicine.' This one sentence answers 3 searches (i.e., search for "Dr. Bob Clump", "palm beach vet", and "pet medicine".)

When you think you have it right put on your Homer Simpson hat. Dumb yourself down to the level of an under-paid flunky on the night shift and see if you still get the gist of what your web site is all about. Then simplify it with even more powerful and direct words.

By the way, when I say spiders read text I mean exactly that. They don't read graphics. If your keywords are really graphics or icons the spider can't understand them. So if your web designer is

afflicted with art-directoritis (an incurable condition in which the afflicted party strives for `beauty' at the expense of pleasing the spider) dump her. Fast. And get some text on the front page.

It is possible to get well listed without doing all this work and it happens all the time. But it is dumb luck, or a paid listing, or the site as been around so long that it has crept to the top of by some sort of sympathy algorithm. Do the work. You'll be happier in the end.

That is the really important stuff. Get your key words and description properly worked into your site and you have given yourself the best opportunity to get properly listed on the best search engines.

Comments on this article? Contact me!

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## **What Your Web Designer Isn't Telling You**

**By Kalena Jordan**

### **What Your Web Designer Isn't Telling You by Kalena Jordan**

If I was to ask you right now "Are you absolutely certain that your web site is optimized for high search engine rankings?", what would you say?

What if I was to ask "How many search engines has your site been registered with?" Or how about "Does your site have tailored title and META Tags?"

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If you would answer "No" or "I don't know" to any of these questions, you would be amongst the 70% of web site owners whose web sites are missing out on search engine traffic because they are not designed for high rankings. Has your web designer optimized YOUR site? Have they submitted it to the top ten search engines and directories? More than likely, you don't know because they haven't told you. Ask them TODAY!

But what exactly is search engine optimization? Simply explained, it is the technique of attaining a high ranking in search engines and directories via changes to your site code to make it more search engine compatible.

Did you know that key search words and phrases in your "title tag" and "META tags" (in the HTML script of your site) and body text are often very important references that search engines use when ranking web sites for search relevancy? Optimizing your site meta tags and your body text for search engines ensures that it ranks highly for particular words or phrases that you would expect potential visitors to type in to search engines to find your site.

For example, if you are a Miami florist, you should have logical search phrases such as "flowers", "Miami florists", "bouquets Miami" and even target search terms such as "Miami weddings", "Valentine's Day gifts" etc integrated in your title and meta tags, as well as in the visible text of your site. That way, if anyone types in those phrases in a search engine, your site is more likely to appear higher in the search results.

So why wasn't your site optimised for search engines when it was built? Depending on who developed your site and how it was built, you'll find a million different reasons for this. Many web developers believe it is the site marketer's job to ensure the site is found in search engines and vice versa. Most don't bother submitting your site to the important search engines, assuming you or your marketing department will do it. Or perhaps it wasn't in your original development budget.

Not many web design firms know how or have time to optimize a site successfully, no matter what they tell you. They might feel it is outside their core business, or they might believe it is not part of the "design process". Consequently, your site can be launched for many months without the search engines having any idea it exists. Some web development firms don't include even the most basic META tags in your site code when building it. Or those that do include META tags without close consultation with you, resulting in the wrong search terms used and poor performance. This is quite typical! Remember that search engine optimization is a relatively new science and requires both client

interaction and constant monitoring to be successful.

The bottom line? If your designer can't show you the high rankings they've achieved for other clients, they won't be able to optimize your site properly. Search engine optimization (SEO) specialists have sprung up to fill the need for these services. Many SEO's will work either directly with you or with your web site designer to ensure your site gets the exposure it deserves in the most popular search engines and directories. Find a specialist with a good track record and reap the results.

Remember, search engine users generally only explore the first 10 or 20 sites in the search results. If

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you site isn't in the top 20, you won't be found, it's as simple as that. Always include search engine optimization into your marketing budget or your site could be as effective as a billboard at the end of a dead end street.

Article by Kalena Jordan, CEO of Web Rank. Kalena was one of the first search engine optimization experts in Australia & New Zealand and is well known and respected in her field. For more of her articles on search engine ranking and online marketing, please visit <http://www.high-search-engine-ranking.com>



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