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Doorway Pages by Any Other Name

By Sid Hale

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I would have thought that the subject of Doorway Pages (Entry Pages, Gateway Pages, etc.) had been exhaustively explored by now, but we tend to forget that there are new users coming on the internet daily, and there hasn't been much coverage on the topic recently.

There are many design and development tools (free or otherwise) available for the new webmaster, so almost anyone can build a website, but they face the same age-old problem of trying to find ways to get their new site noticed (and the longer it takes, the more frantic they get).

We all go through the same learning curve. We read or hear about various promotion techniques. We get advice on Search Engine Optimization, Opt-in Lists, Safe Lists, E-zine advertising, and the list goes on. There is a wealth of information on the web, but there is probably just as much, or more, misinformation. Not only can the important information change rapidly, but it is awfully easy to stumble across archived information, or a free eBook – and not realize that it is outdated.

Anyway, a reader recently asked me about the usefulness of Doorway Pages to increase their rankings in the search engines. It will soon become obvious what my short answer would have been, but I don't normally just accept someone else's opinion without an explanation. I hope you are the same way.

Doorway pages were first developed as a means to create a page that was optimized for a particular search engine in order to achieve a higher ranking. Because search engines used different algorithms for ranking web sites, it had become impossible to optimize a single page to meet the ranking criteria of all of them. You could get a page ranked high on one search engine and watch your rankings plummet on another.

The answer?

Create multiple (Doorway) pages – each optimized for a single, major search engine, and have each of them link, redirect, or forward to the actual web page you wanted to promote, and then submit that page to that particular search engine – instead of the actual web page your viewer will ultimately see. While it was a little extra work to create 6,7, or even a dozen or more Doorway pages – the general consensus was that the ranking results in the targeted search engines made it all worthwhile.

The problem with this...

As with every good technique, tip, or trick – some overzealous (and that's being kind) "marketers" (and that's being liberal) will find a way to abuse it. Just as some people will put popular search terms in their keywords Meta Tag regardless of whether those terms have any relevance to the web page being

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submitted, they also began spamming the search engines with Doorway pages.

Now, understand that the search engines gain their competitive edge by being able to deliver more relevant results to any set of search terms. It is their business purpose, their entire reason for existing. The better they are at doing this, the more popular their service becomes over their competition, and the more successful they will be. They will combat anyone or anything that interferes with their ability to deliver their product or service (wouldn't you?).

Doorway pages are viewed by the search engines as an attempt to manipulate them and their service. How can they possibly differentiate their service from the competition if they allow their "supplier" (web masters) to dictate what they will deliver to their "customer" (web surfers)? It didn't take long for the major search engines to learn to identify Doorway pages, and their overwhelming response has been to:

downgrade the results attained through the use of those pages,

refuse to list those pages, or

ban the site from listing on their service altogether

I could have written this article just based on the regular reading I do, but then I would have just been passing on someone else's opinion. In order to respond to my reader with absolute confidence, I first researched over 3 years of articles from a myriad of sources. From those it was easy to see the trend build, and then come into disfavor. Finally, I went to the search engines themselves to read their current policies and guidelines. Some mention Doorway pages specifically, but even those that require a little interpretation are pretty easy to understand.

The major search engines disapprove of methods that present different content to their spiders than the content that is ultimately presented to the viewer. For your own edification, here are just a few of the listings I found, with snippets from their guidelines:

From Google: <http://www.google.com/webmasters/guidelines.html>

Make pages for users, not for search engines. Don't deceive your users, or present different content to search engines than you display to users.

Avoid "doorway" pages created just for search engines, or other "cookie cutter" approaches such as affiliate programs with little or no original content.

From AltaVista:

<http://addurl.altavista.com/addurl/new#rls>

Pages that duplicate content, either by excessive submission of the same page, submitting the same pages from multiple domains, or submitting the same content from multiple hosts

Pages that are machine-generated with minimal or no content, whose sole purpose is to get a user to click to another page

Pages that contain only links to other pages

From AllTheWeb: http://www.alltheweb.com/info/about/spam_policy.html

exclude Page Spam documents from our index or at least disregard links from it when computing static rank

The Alternative:

If your keyword phrases are relevant to your site content, then it follows that the content will naturally include those relevant keyword phrases. If not, then you need to either rethink that content and its presentation – or rethink your choice of keyword phrases. It's really that simple. Each page of your site can and should have its own topic and its own set of relevant keyword phrases. Make sure that every

page of your site contains a Title, a Meta description, and Meta keywords (again those keyword phrases that are relevant to that page).

Then when you submit your "home" page to a search engine, it can spider your entire site through your linked pages, picking up all that Meta information so that each page gets listed properly. In a sense, every page on your site becomes sort of a "Doorway" to the rest of the site. Concentrate on building content, and give the engines just what they want to see anyway: relevant content.

When submitting your web site to directories, submit each page you want listed (with the relevant search terms for that page).

Then of course, it is a matter of sitting back and waiting unless you opt for one of the "express" listing services or "pay-per-click" placement – but those are separate topics, deserving of their own articles.

With straight submission, it will take some time for your site to even get listed, but once you're there you can get very targeted traffic for a very long time to come.

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SEARCH ENGINES GIVE YOU FREE ADVERTISING!

By Richard Igoe

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Getting a good ranking in the major search engines is probably **THE BEST** way to get traffic to your site, but just how to do this is the question. There are literally millions of web sites out there.

But remember a good website ranking is virtually **FREE** advertising and will bring in a steady flow of traffic, so it is worth going to some lengths to get a good position.

First, sit back for a minute and ask yourself what exactly you are selling. What keywords are people going to search for to find your page? Getting a good ranking on a search engine depends on the keywords you are using – or more specifically the keywords people are using to find you!

Your aim should be to create a few **HIGHLY FOCUSED** doorway pages for your site, each one optimized for a particular keyword or phrase. But be honest with yourself. Use keywords or phrases that describe your product or service as closely as possible.

To help you find out which keywords are most searched for, and how likely you are of getting a good ranking, there is a very good tool called WordTracker. It emails you a free weekly report of the top 500 keywords (phrases) that are

requested on the major search engines. It also filters out all pornographic words which account for 25% of search engine requests. However it also does more!

You can enter a keyword or phrase that you want people to find your webpage with, and it will return a list of 100 other related keywords. You then click on any of those keywords and you will get a list of how many searches have been made for it in the last 24 hours. Then Wordtracker compares the results with the number of pages ranked on AltaVista for each keyword or phrase and compiles a report for you.

Now here is why this tool is so valuable. You can see which keywords you have more chance with in obtaining a higher search engine ranking – those keywords with a lot of

hits but relatively fewer pages listed on AltaVista – and create doorway pages optimized for those keywords. The doorway pages you create will now have a better chance of ranking in the top 20 or 30. Wordtracker has a free trial.

Now after choosing your keywords, create a doorway page for each one.

Most search engines place a high importance on the keywords and description "META" tags on your web pages. For a more detailed explanation of META tags, look at our HTML tutorial at <http://www.TheWebsEye.com/HTML.htm>.

As well as the meta tags, search engines take into account a number of other considerations such as keywords in the TITLE tag, in your header tags, and how keywords are placed on your pages. If you want to know more about how search engines rank your pages we strongly recommend you download the award winning free e-book "Search Engine Tactics" from our downloads page – <http://www.TheWebsEye.com/downloads.htm> (only 129 KB).

The more specific your keyword or phrase, the easier it is to get a high ranking. A page optimized for "Chinese herbal tea" should get a good ranking much more easily than a page optimized for "tea", because there would be a lot fewer sites trying to have well-positioned pages.

What we are saying therefore is that you need to use keywords that directly describe your product or service. If you are paying someone to do it for you, make sure you tell them the exact search phrases you want your site to be found with.

Designing a number of "doorway" pages, each page optimized for a different keyword or phrase, will multiply your traffic. ALSO remember that search engines don't all use the same set of rules (algorithms) to rank your pages. Some might place more emphasis on the META tags while others may spider the content.

You can take your page optimization one step further now, and create a doorway page not only for each keyword, but for each of the major search engines. So it is quite easy to have 30 doorway pages for one product or service – 3 different keywords and 10 search engines. To do this properly involves searching for your keyword on a particular search engine and then analyzing what the top 5 or 10 sites have in common. You can then optimize your own

page based on the results of your search. Doing this manually is not time-efficient when you can get software to do it for you.

There are a few good software packages that will spider your web pages, compare them with the top "X" results for a particular search, and then let you know what you should change. They can also monitor, keep track of your positions in the different search engines, and schedule your submissions. Optimizing your pages is still time consuming but if you are prepared to spend an hour a day creating a new doorway page, you will soon be able to create your own "traffic puller" on the web.

You will find details of how to get WordTracker and free trials of Webpage optimizing software at our website – <http://www.TheWebsEYE.com/search-engines.htm>.

Richard Igoe, – <http://www.TheWebsEYE.com> – FOCUSSING on the ESSENTIALS of website design, promotion and internet marketing.



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