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How to improve your search engine position

By Polly Nelson

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When promoting your website, the importance of submission to major search engines cannot be overstated. "46% of web-users use search engines to first find a website."1 They won't find yours unless it features in these engines. Getting a good ranking, however, is not as easy as it seems. To better your chances, you need to make sure that you do the following things before submitting your site.

Start by writing a descriptive title for each page of your site. This should accurately describe the services offered on the page in around 5-8 words, avoiding words such as 'the' and 'and'. When your website comes up on the search engines, this title will be the thing that first grabs the attention of the user. Next, you need to write your 'meta-tags'. Featured on every page of your site (although hidden to the user), these are simply either 'keyword tags' (10-12 important keywords / phrases that describe your services) or 'description tags' (just a short description of what's on the page - designed to attract users from the search engines). If you are trying to build your own meta-tags and are unsure of how to do it, here's a free service to help you: www.bcentral.com/products/metatags.asp

When deciding on your keywords, imagine your audience and how they would search for your services. Your keywords need to be the search terms that they will type into the engines. Will they search using industry-standard terms, or will you need to put some layman terms in too? You should also think about spelling mistakes. Is it likely that customers will search for you using mis-spellings or typos? If so, you should consider including these in your meta-tags. You can also have a look into which search terms are currently most in-use: try www.wordtracker.com for this. Also consider having a look at your competition - type your keywords / phrases into google with "inverted commas around them". The results that come up are your direct competition for these search terms, so if there are too many, you should think of alternative terms.

When you have finalised your keywords/phrases, write a 'description' meta-tag for each page of 200-250 characters. This doesn't need to include any words from your title, but should be based around your keywords.

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Next, you need to optimise each page of your site by using your keywords throughout the content and in alternative text for the images. If your keywords do not accurately reflect the content on your pages you are unlikely to get a good listing. You should however bear in mind that unnecessary repetition of keywords in your content will also damage your ranking. For optimum results, mix the words and phrases up in different combinations rather than using the same one over and again.

Although you can expect it to take up to (and sometimes exceeding) six weeks to get listed in a search engine, you should make sure that your site is 'search engine friendly' before submitting it. Ensure you have done the following: Read the rules/listing requirements of each search engine and make sure your site complies; Bear in mind that frames and flash-based pages on your site make it hard for the search engines to index your pages; Ensure your meta-tags are complete and your content accurately reflects them; Make sure all your pages link to each other (especially if you have a 'cover page' that

redirects to the rest of your site) so the engines can find all the pages; Never have a link that points back to the current page, (i.e. if your logo is a link to your home page you must make sure that it is not a link on the home page); and finally – Make sure that you do not over-submit your site on each search engine. Most have some sort of 'spam trigger', which this will set off and you will not be listed.

Submitting your home page once to each engine should be all that is necessary.

Apart from meta-tags, there are a number of things you can do to improve your ranking on the search engines. If you are willing to have links to other sites on your website, Link Exchanges can be a great way to promote your site and improve its position on the search engines. If you have a large number of incoming links to your site from other sites, search engines are likely to rank you much higher up the list. Links from high traffic sites will be of the most use, so ask for a link from any associations you are a member of. You can also request reciprocal links from complementary sites (consider an 'on topic' link, i.e. "website design and custom software development" – including important keywords), and develop an out of the way page to put links to their sites on.

Another thing you can do is to make sure that you provide useful and plentiful content on your site, for good indexing and good inbound links. You could include a press page on your site for all your media releases and mentions (you can submit press releases online at www.prweb.com , amongst other places), or you could write useful articles to put on your site and submit them to relevant places online (good places to start include www.GoArticles.com – there are many others, try to ensure you include a link to your site at the end of the article).

Other online places to promote your site (if you have the time) include newsgroups and discussion lists. Use google groups to find appropriate discussions and make sure your 'signature' includes your website link.

When submitting your site to the search engines, avoid the plethora of free programs on the internet that promise to submit you to 300+ engines – this is largely a waste of your time. Most search engines are powered by the few major ones, which usually have at least some sort of a free submit service. (If you are thinking of paying for a high search engine ranking, the pay-per-click options offered by search engines such as <https://adwords.google.com/select/main> can be a cost-effective option.) Make sure you submit to the major engines and directories, including www.google.com , www.yahoo.com , www.altavista.com , www.dmoz.org , www.lycos.com , www.overture.com ,

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www.askalix.com/uk/index.php3 , www.thomsonlocal.com .

Also, look for specialised directories for your sector. There are hundreds of these to be found, so take the time to search the web for them (www.google.com is a good place to start) and get yourself listed; with a link to your site if at all possible as this will help with your search-engine positioning. Similarly, there are specialised search engines you can submit to: try www.searchengineguide.com/searchengines.html for this.

Of course, you should make sure that your website address features on all your company stationery and literature.

Finally, a few words about the use of email to promote your site... Ensure all the emails you and your staff send have a signature which includes your website url; put a feedback form on your site and encourage users to leave their email to receive updates and offers from you; but whatever you do, don't send out bulk, unsolicited, untargeted emails – it will do more to damage your credibility than almost anything else.

There are, of course, many more strategies that can be used to better your search engine position and you should bear in mind that website promotion has to be an ongoing process. However, hopefully the methods described above will help you start your quest for a top search engine ranking.

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Polly is FWOSS' research director and does a lot of search engine optimisation for clients. She writes many technological articles for the company, which can be viewed online.

Search Engine Placement

By MoneyMadam

You have probably heard a lot about Search Engine Optimization or the phrase like "make your site search engine friendly". But how exactly can you go about doing that?!

Here you'll discover this search engine optimisation information to be much unlike than what is presently provided on the web. I have been in your position and given by my experiences I'll tell you like it is, no ugly tactics, no hype, just direct facts so you could have your own determination about what is best for your site.

To begin with, I suggest you understand Google's FAQ and search engine guidelines. Google is the search engine market leader so you may find that most of the other search engines mimic many of their techniques. If you study how to do well in Google, you will do good in virtually all of the other second tier search engines.

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To gain your site's page rank is one of the key to enhance the site position in search engines. To increase page rank Your best two options are writing articles that get published, and requesting links from vendors and other business partners. Remember to make sure the links you get into your site is for your keyword. Also link to your blogs/articles from each other to increase your network.

Another thing, if you wish to get indexed faster you can submit your RSS feed to MSN, Yahoo and Google. This works great and will save you a load of time.

The above is your first hint... while this won't increase your search engine position immediately, but it might tempt Google to spider your site on a regular basis keeping your web site listings a bit more current on Google.

Below are the best few places to submit your articles: GoArticle.com EzineArticle.com Isnare.com Contentdesk.com

Good luck & Have a good marketing!!

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