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Inappropriate Website Promotion Methods

By Dmitry Antonoff, Irina Ponomareva

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The list of dubious means of search engine optimisation lengthens year on year. In theory, of course, we could all employ such means, but there are ethical issues to be tackled. And even if we ignore fair-play principles for a moment, it's worth pointing out that cheap, scam-like promotion methods usually look cheap and scam-like, annoy Internet users and have a short lifespan because counter-measures are created.

This article describes misleading, illegal and unethical methods of search engine optimisation, explains why they are wrong and highlights the possible adverse results.

Spam

keyword density

In their naive quests for high positions in search engines' listings, some web site owners simply cram as many key phrases as possible into the body text of their resources. However, if a key phrase is mentioned too often in the text (so-called keyword damping), the website may be overlooked by the more advanced search engines. Moreover, site content will undoubtedly be unreadable for visitors. Nevertheless, few people know what keyword density is optimal or at what point keyword damping begins. Unfortunately, this can mean that innocent web site owners or editors can leave an undesirable content by chance, just because of a lack of attention or experience. To help prevent having your resource rejected by search engines, just keep to the following recommendations before launching your web site.

1. Look through your text once again. Do you see certain words and phrases dancing in front of your eyes? If not, you can pass your text through to the next test. If you do, try reducing the number of sentences, writing alternative phrases or even consider starting again from scratch.

2. Read out the text of your web page to co-workers or friends or ask them to read it to you. Does it sound annoying or amateurish because of excessive keyword density? If not, the page is ready for launching.

Hidden text

Hiding text is another means of fooling search engines, but one that is becoming more futile. Body text is hidden when:

·the font is exactly the same colour as, or differs very slightly from, a web page's background colour, or

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·when it is so tiny on the screen (1 or 2 pixels) that visitors don't see it.

The idea behind the scam is that search engine spiders will read the code that makes up the page but human visitors will not notice the text, or will see it as a detail in the graphic design. So the theory goes, webmasters can place commonly searched words in these unseen areas that will hoist their pages up the search engine rankings, even if the true content has nothing to do with the subject searched for. They think that hiding 'Britney Spears' on their mountain resort's web page will cause an avalanche of visitors and increase sales. Life isn't that simple!

If you put yourself in the user's position, you'll soon see why this won't work. You won't be too pleased about having to scroll through endless pages filled with absolutely useless content when searching for the resource that you need.

Because the best search engines (i.e., the ones that people actually use) can efficiently resist this kind

of cheating, dishonest webmasters will have their rankings reduced or be left off indices, even if the penalty is not instant. Remember also that a search entry's very popularity means that a page thus 'optimised' will be just one of millions of others, further reducing any perceived competitive advantage.

Link exchange networks (link farming)

The Web is by nature a network of interconnected sites supporting one another via hyperlinks. Some search engines use the number of links pointing to a site as a factor in the site's popularity and, therefore, its ranking. For example, there are thousands of pages linking to NASA's website, so it ranks highly and is spidered frequently. As with all relevance calculation methods, this one is open to abuse. In the hope of multiple inbound links improving a website's ranking, web pages, called link farms, are created containing nothing but links to other sites.

However, this method of promotion is quite insecure, for three main reasons:

- 1.as a rule, such pages contain nothing but endless rows and columns of hyperlinks with no description of the resources, therefore the search value of the link farm itself is tiny;
- 2.such linking is useless, since pages which contain too many links transfer almost no value to the individual sites they link to; and
- 3.hardly any visitors are going to click on a site from such a page, as the probability of a successful click on a page full of potential clicks is minimal.

Keep away from link farms. Many owners of popular and well-promoted websites have already got sick of daily emails saying things such as: 'I've visited your website, I like it, so I've placed a link to it and I'm waiting for you put a link to mine on your page'. The point is that it is the quality of links that is of high importance for modern search engines when ranking a website, not the quantity. Relevance is everything, and search engines are getting better at detecting and rewarding it.

So, what are quality links? The simple answer is links to web sites devoted to related issues.

Therefore, it is better to exchange links with business partners, sites with common themes or information portals dealing with problems of a similar business sphere. Also, you should insist upon adding short descriptions of your resources to hyperlinks.

The value of simple reciprocal linking in terms of search engine optimisation has diminished over the last few years. We can suggest another method, which tends to be much more promising: publication and wide distribution of articles that may be of interest to visitors. The articles contain links to sites and certainly attract your targeted audience.

Cloaking

Cloaking is another technology that is widely used by dishonest webmasters. Its effectiveness lies in identifying robots, which crawl around the Web, by their IP addresses or host names. A special

doorway page, developed beforehand and polished for SEO purposes but unreadable for humans, is shown to the robot and added to the search engine's index, while a human visitor will see a very different page.

However, modern search engines are able to unmask those who specialise in such tricks. For example, a robot can come from an unknown IP address or disguise itself as numerous human visitors and come from different addresses. Moreover, 'sneaking' is encouraged by the managers of some search engines, whereby visitors report that the content of a particular web site found by a search engine has nothing in common with its description on the search engine result page. Then, if a search engine's staff discover that a webmaster is employing illegal methods, his or her site will instantly be ejected from that index.

Why Cloaking Is Always A Bad Idea

(by Alan Perkins)

Doorway pages

These are pages specially prepared for search engines and contain a number of isolated key phrases which are designed solely to attract search engines and cover issues completely different from those of

the site proper. These pages are often concealed from human visitors with the help of cloaking (as mentioned above), because they contain nothing of interest. Since it is necessary to hide the fact that their content is meaningless, these pages need regular updating. However, programmers who are in charge of development of searching algorithms are constantly looking for new means of semantic analysis of a web page content. It is becoming more and more hard to create a really 'smart' doorway page that would successfully deceive those algorithms.

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The Semantic Web

All this results in a waste of the webmaster's time and mental energy - energy that could be better spent on good activities such as optimising and polishing existing web pages and creating new ones with attractive, useful and relevant content.

Multi-level marketing (MLM)

The plan looks so simple. A certain web site raises its ranking in search engines listings due to receiving, say, five inbound links from other sites. Each of these sites aims at getting five links from some other sites, and so on. As a result, the site which is on top of the pyramid inherits value from all descending sites. So the main goal of this kind of website promotion is reduced to merely clambering to the top of this accurate and well proportioned structure. So why is it no good?

First, this scheme needs to be well organised and managed by a person who is in charge of looking after the pyramid, drawing new members and tracing their progress. If he or she decides to take fees for this job it may lead to a conflict of interests. Dragged into the fight for reaching the top of the pyramid, webmasters will have less time for polishing web sites. Thus, the pyramid structure destroys the idea of the 'natural evolution' of the Internet, a principle that is widely speculated when discussing issues of web promotion.

Visit Search Engine Watch and use the following principle belonging to the code of honour of search engine specialists: 'Keep away from schemes'.

<http://www.searchenginewatch.com/searchday/article.php/3100291>

Clickers

False overstating of a website's traffic statistics is another unfair method of web promotion. It suggests

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that the resource is very popular among Internet users, although it is actually not so. The aim of this trick is to deceive potential buyers of the website, rather than search engines, because site owners can gain maximum profit selling the resource if they demonstrate high traffic for the website.

The so-called clickers are hired and instructed to do this job. They keep visiting the web site several times a day on a regular basis for a modest fee (or free of charge if the site owner is an undisguised cheater), each visit being recorded by a hit counter. A high stated popularity of a web site will increase its perceived value. Then, when the contract is concluded and the web site finds its new owner, the number of visitors will drop, possibly to zero, as the phantom visits will, unsurprisingly, stop.

Indexing of a website on different servers

In an effort to attract extra traffic, many people register several domains linking to one and the same resource. But nowadays it makes no sense to duplicate web pages with different domain names but identical content, for modern search engines have learned to identify them. It can even result in being removed from indexes.

It is difficult to avoid such troubles and stop a search engine robot from doubting the originality of the content at all web pages exposed to indexing. First of all, the robot sees that the resources are linking to each other and compares their headings, key phrases and content. Pages which look suspicious to it are processed by a special algorithm and deemed duplicated if:

1. they hold outbound links which lead to one and the same resource; or
2. these links are equal to or less than 10 per cent different in number.

Some search engines, for instance AltaVista, also employ this program when checking up their indices revealing pages which were entered there by mistake. Therefore, don't be surprised if you find your

duplicated web pages expelled from databases.

Placing of duplicated pages on different servers is also regarded as an unethical way to promote a web site and is best avoided. However, if you find the method essential and are not going to take the foregoing advice, we offer these recommendations:

1. alter the content on your web pages so that they look somewhat different;
2. slightly change headings, the list of key phrases, and the description;
3. make sure that at least 10 per cent of the number of links on your pages is not identical.

Conclusion

Even though there are many legitimate and efficient methods of web site promotion, many people find unethical ones more attractive. Disregarding web surfers' interests, they attempt to deceive the search engine itself in an effort to make it place their resources nearer the top of a listing. Most of all, they concern themselves with visitors' clicks, thus transferring money to a site owner's purse.

Left unchecked, such unscrupulous practices will be counterproductive. The reason? The web will be driven into chaos and cheating will prevail, thus making it a battlefield for 'intellectual' confrontation between crafty webmasters and developers of special algorithms to resist their tricks. As the war is fought, both sides will make small gains which will instantly be swallowed up by newer ideas. In no man's land will be the frustrated users of the Internet, gradually losing faith and trust in the medium and starting to switch off.

We are convinced that it is preferable to work towards better quality, more interesting web pages, polished, usable sites and improved services. The result will be well-deserved brand recognition and insistence, and sites will promote themselves.

Dmitry Antonoff, 28. I've been with Magic Web Solutions ltd. (UK), Dartford, Kent, as a marketer and

an SEO consultant, since May 2003. I specialise in website promotion, and copywriting. I'm eager to share my experience with the Internet community. Irina, Ponomareva, 32. I joined Magic Web Solutions Ltd. (UK), Dartford, Kent, on March 2003. I've been acting as a web master, a developer, and an SEO specialist ever since.

How To Acquire Free Web Site Promotion

By David Riewe

You have finished making your own website. You have introduced your company and presented your products and services. You have added propositions and promos to catch your target audience's attention. You have achieved the dos and don'ts of building a company web site. But why isn't your website a major success?

Maybe you're not planning the key to the best promotion of your web site. Here are some guidelines on how to acquire free web site promotions for your company's success.

If you have started to promote your web site, keep it constant. If you promote your site with persistence, it will catch your audience's attention.

Be patient. Try each method in promotion until you acquire the best, free promotion there is. You have to accept trial and error for your web site to reach the top.

There are many ways for your web site to be seen. Here are some free web site promotions you could try until you find the most effective.

*Free promotions such as search engines and directories would give your web site the deserved traffic you always wanted. Make sure to check your web site's ranking to know whether or not this type of free promotion is right for you.

*Make a deal with other web sites on trading links which could help both web sites. Make sure to use words that could easily interest the audience.

*Find free classified ads that could boost the promotion of your web site. These ads could be seen by other people who you are not targeting for, but may as well be interested in your services.

*Free and low-cost internet banners are spread all through out the World Wide Web. Banners that pop-up at the top of a page or in a separate window would automatically catch your target audience's attention.

If your web site and its free promotion did not work even after accomplishing these methods, analyze your web site. Track down all visitors, advertisements, and transactions. Then locate errors in your web site. Upload new files to your web site continuously for audience to return for new products and services. Monitor your own web site if it's up in the market or down.

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Then be ready to try the methods again and surely it will work.

It has always been said that the best things in life are free. Yes they are. And as soon as your free web site promotion proves to the audience its worth, then you'll believe it's true.

Little Known Minnesota Man Making Six Figures Per Year Online, From the Comfort of Home, Reveals

His Top Internet Money–Makers.



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