

Measuring the difficulty and merit of SE positioning results

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**Measuring the difficulty and merit of SE positioning results**

**By John Tello**

The SEO (search engine optimizing) business has emerged as a major player in the Internet

business marketplace. Webmasters and website owners always arrive to a stage where they wonder why their business fail in making money, despite catchy domain name, excellent design and amazing Flash animation in the home page. The first one to blame is the webmaster, which is always at hand because he only has to deal with servers, hosting features, market analysis, programming languages, HTML design, art, copywriting, customer support and related tasks.

When the webmaster realizes the need for visibility and SE free traffic, usually looks for SEO services. Selecting a SEO company is not easy, because their methods are secret, and their results difficult to compare. It is common to detect SEOs that are not available because they are busy selling their own stuff and enjoying the results, and SEOs ready to sell services in order to collect some money while learning how to do the job.

Most of the SEOs charge a fixed fee, which can depend on the number of pages, number of keywords, languages in case of bilingual sites, and maybe words, in extensive websites. Internal links are another pricing factor, because linking usually goes together with complexity.

If we need to make a SEO quote we also assess the current SEO status, because is easier to work with a new site, where any result will be welcome, than optimizing an established website, with decent PageRank, many incoming links and a structure that needs to be respected to avoid loss of existing traffic. It is also likely that someone had started doing SEO work, and the obvious steps are already taken, forcing us to concentrate on subtle, controversial or hard-to-implement changes. We made a first attempt to an online SEO cost calculator based on number of pages and keywords, but we still use a lot of guessing and risking for our budgets.

The client very often wants us SEO to work on a SE-positioning-results basis. So, if we do not get results, we do not collect any payment. Inexperienced site owners are an easy prey. I can offer them a first screen in Google under Joe Average Butcher store, and get away with it. However, when clients demand a first screen under sex site or mp3 CD we are in some trouble.

## Measuring the difficulty and merit of SE positioning results

Measuring the difficulty and/or merit of a given positioning status can be useful for:

- charging SEO customers on a results basis
- establishing the value of a SEO technique, tool or company
- appraising domains or developed websites
- choosing keywords before starting a SEO campaign, in order to pick up reachable targets (not too easy, not too difficult)

The existing competition for a keyword has two meanings in this context. One is the probable difficulty of ranking, because it is likely that good SEOs have entered that market. The other is the possible value for the client once we manage to rank at the top, since a lot of searchers will probably mean a lot of traffic as a prize for any good ranking.

Contrasting with the strategic value of SE Positioning, there is no published index or method for measuring SE positioning results. We did not find any such measure, while searching for these and related terms:

measure SE positioning  
'SE positioning measure'  
'SE positioning results'  
'SE positioning index'

So, if someone created some wise SEO Rate or Index, he did not know enough SEO to make it appear in Google... Bad sign.

(I might be including relevant keywords in this article for indexation sake... sorry for that ;))

SEO companies do not share a standard, and when they need to compete, they run positioning contests with a fixed, arbitrary keyword. So, if you search under *mangeur de cigogne* (stork eater) you will be surprised to see 153,000 results, mostly arising from a well known SEO contest. The real world SEO contest is the word SEO, which is the top prize for most SEO companies, and has 28 million Google SERPs. Getting to the 20th post of those is much harder than being on top of the 10 million that search for optimized page, as we are. Or getting first out of the 2 million that search in Spanish for *promocion de sitios* (site promotion), which was comparably a piece of cake.

As you see, I am using the number of Google indexed pages as a measure of popularity. If you are 1st among one million that is good. But, is it better to be 2nd among 2,000,000? How about 10th among 20,000,000?

What we all know is that being 20th among 100,000 beats being 50th among 1000 million, just because nobody ever cares to search for a 50th positioned website.

So, we first suggested:

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Keyword SEPI – Search Engine Positioning Index = Total page number / Position ^ 2)

The Google Positioning Index for my page positioned 1st under Google First Place would be:

$$185 / 1^2 = 185$$

This is a usable index, but it is still incomplete.

It happens that being first under improve womanhood (240,000 results) seems to be quite easy for experienced SEOs, while improve manhood (500,000 results) seems almost impossible. Why? Because the first 100 results under Womanhood are there by pure chance, while the first 100 under Manhood are there because savvy SEOs trying to sell Viagra made a hard-to-beat effort to be there.

For a quality estimation of positioning difficulty we need to analyze the first 10 sites in the SERP, look for PageRank, backlinks and optimization status, among other factors.

To detect if a keyword is very competitive and searched for we have several methods. We can count the number of AdWords, which reflect the interest of webmasters for that keyword. Also, when SEOs fail positioning a site in the organic (free) SE results, they pay a PPC campaign such as Adwords. We also use the Overture Keyword Selection Tool, which provides statistics on monthly searches.

The market variables are a different story. If our client wants to be first among 'stork eater' we will have a very hard job getting him there, although there is not commercial value on that keyword whatsoever.

The best estimating of Keyword Difficulty is a complex formula devised by the authors of seomoz.org . It is free, and it takes into account many the factors, like:

- # of results in Google, Yahoo and others
- # of results with and without quotes
- # of paid ads
- Alexa ranking

Keyword Difficulty goes from 0 to 100%, although I never found any keyword higher than 0.5. Sex, hosting and Brittney all are around 0.45. Very weird keywords are usually 0.2 or so.

Thus, Total Results and Keyword Difficulty are used to calculate our new index. These factors influencing positioning difficulty were chosen because they are relatively easy to calculate. However, I wish I knew all what it takes to be always first in SERP. Of course, that is a valuable commercial secret.

A good Search Engine Positioning Index should be:

- Reproducible
- Consistent
- Non-manipulable
- Easy to calculate
- Accepted
- Non-proprietary
- Free (or cheap)

Then, I propose:

Keyword SEPI = Total page results for the keyword searched between quotes in Google \* Seomoz.org  
Keyword Difficulty ^2(to the square) / (Position ^2)

Keyword SEPI is: Keyword Search Engine Positioning Index

To analyze multi-keyword results, such as those coming from a campaign, a tool or a SEO company, we consider the sumatory of the partial SEPIs.

We believe SEPI will be a useful index for the webmaster community. A free SEPI calculator is located in our website:

<http://www.domaingrower.com/domain-valuation.htm>

## **Find Your Unique Buying Advantage And Watch Your Profits Grow**

**By Noel Peebles**

### **Find Your Unique Buying Advantage And Watch Your Profits Grow by Noel Peebles**

Clear positioning is critical for any product or service, whether new or existing. Without clear positioning it is hard to find or establish a Unique Buying Advantage (UBA).

The first thing to consider when working on your positioning strategy is the question "where do you come in first?" Then consider what key benefits you offer over your competitors. If you don't already know what your customers think about your business, do some quick research to find out.

What's the ONE WORD or phrase that comes to mind when customers think of your business? Is it service, price, selection, convenience, quality or something else? Do you

really "own" that word or phrase in the customer's mind?  
Does it reflect the position you want?

If you can't think of that ONE WORD or phrase, then maybe you're trying to be all things to all people. Narrow the focus. You can't stand for something if you chase after everything.

Positioning is the marketing tool that helps prospects and customers identify what's unique about your product or service and your company. This enables you to turn your positioning into creative advertising.

Use your positioning to give your advertising purpose, to give it a message, and to give it the appropriate tone. Then and only then, are you on your way to developing a good advertising strategy. Do that well and you'll save money – and make money!

Positioning will guide you to make sensible decisions about when and where to advertise, and what message to communicate. It will help you with targeting and also help you identify what benefits you are selling.

The advertising will also need to project your business' personality. Is it serious, fun or classy – positioning will help you decide. Armed with an advertising strategy, you are now ready to develop a creative idea – one that

will dramatize that single-minded benefit or Unique Buying Advantage (UBA).

So, if you want to motivate customers to do business with you instead of your competitors then the answer is to clarify your positioning and find a UBA – one that you and you alone own.

Your UBA becomes the single most important factor that drives your business, your customers, your staff and most importantly, yourself!

Let's face it, if you make a great promise to the market place, you have to back it up and so does your staff. Your UBA becomes the rudder. Once you and your staff know and understand your UBA, decision making, tactics

and strategies become a piece of cake. Simply, if it doesn't fit the UBA, you don't do it.

If you do nothing else, please make time for this one marketing strategy. Your life will change for the better if you do.



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