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Rebuild Website or Perform SEO?

By Chris Genge

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Rebuild Website or Perform SEO... which should you do first?

A lot of website owners are interested in rebuilding their website and in performing search engine optimization (SEO), but can't. Budget constraints won't allow for both and so they struggle with which one to do first. Rebuilding a website is a great idea. Performing SEO is better.

The Internet is vast...truly vast. It is comprised of, at last count, over 8-billion web pages and that number increases daily. People need a map to chart this unimaginably large landscapes and search engines are the maps. SEO provides pointers to your business on the maps; rebuilding your website does not.

If you understand the following statement, then the decision is very easy to make – in order to become visible to their second audience (the visitors), websites must first receive adequate top rankings (the first two pages of listing results) by their first audience (the search engines).

Search engine optimization

Search engine optimization is probably the single most important marketing technique that a website owner can do to increase visibility and visitors. Greater visibility and highly targeted visitors improve sales, which in turn, improves the bottom-line.

Numerous studies have proven just how important SEO is for online businesses:

- 50% of those who bought from online retail sites arrived via the search engines (Aggrandise.com, 2002).
- Between 85 and 90% of people use search engines to find websites they've never visited before.
- The Financial Times reported August 2002, that every day over 340-million web users rely on search engines to locate new businesses (DISC).
- 57% of Internet users search the web each day, making search the second most popular Internet activity next to checking email (81%) (DISC).

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Studies have also proven that SEO has the best return on investment (ROI) of any form of advertising in terms of cost-per-acquisition (CPA). Savvy website owners who realize just how fierce competition on the Internet is use SEO to position their business ahead of their competitors. If you are not incorporating SEO as part of a website marketing/promotion strategy you are losing out, because your competition mostly likely is!

If done properly, the results from SEO are very impressive. One of our long time clients in the printing industry has been operating the same site for almost five years. Instead of rebuilding their website which has a very simple design, they decided to perform SEO. That same site now delivers so much business that SEO is the only form of sales and marketing they use (both online and offline). Another client now does as much business in one day as it used to in seven. And this client originally wanted to rebuild their site first. And to this day, the site is still the same except for some minor regular updates. In the past, the client did a lot of print advertising, but because of great

SEO results, they have cut their advertising costs in half and achieved sales growth of 700%! For more great examples, read the case studies on the Search Engine Marketing Professional Organization (SEMPO) website.

Rebuilding a website

Rebuilding a site makes it look nice, provides fresh content, and sometimes improves navigation. Will any of these lead to increased visitors? Most likely not. Making aesthetic changes does very little to increase a website's visibility on the Internet. It is estimated that 56% of ALL websites are "lost in cyberspace"! What is the point of spending money on rebuilding a site if no one ever sees it? It would be a complete waste of time, money, and effort – all of which translate into a very poor ROI.

Your website is competing with over 8-billion (at last count) other pages on the Internet. It will be "lost" by not having it visible to the search engines – akin to putting up a flashing billboard on a deserted island! It can be the greatest billboard ever designed, but because of its isolated location very few people will see or read it, and thus, it will be a poor source of revenue generation.

The fact is, there are lots of great websites on the Internet. So what? What's the use of having a great website if no one knows about it or can find it? And even if people do know about it, you are still not reaching the largest Internet demographic: the 85 to 90% of ALL Internet users who find what they are looking for by conducting searches on search engines!

The top-4 search engines are Google, Yahoo, MSN, and AOL (CyberAtlas, May 2003). How do they compare in terms of traffic? The info below shows the top 5 results of the Top-50 Internet Property Rankings for October 2003 (ComScore Media Metrix, Nov. 2003). Keep in mind that the table shows total number of unique visitors, not total number of searches. So while MSN is tops in terms of traffic, Google is still the king of search.

Rank Property Unique Visitors (in thousands)

1 MSN-Microsoft sites 109,334

2 Yahoo! sites 108,673

3 AOL Time Warner Network 108,394

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4 eBay 62,454

5 Google sites 58,209

The point of the table is that four out of the top five most-visited sites are search related sites. SEO is your mechanism for becoming visible to this group. SEO is critical to the success of your online venture. Rebuilding is also important, but it can wait.

Other considerations

–Ask yourself, what will deliver more results to my business: rebuilding or SEO?

–What is the purpose of your site? If you use it to bring in customers or sell products, then SEO is definitely the one to do first. If visitors and sales aren't important, but having a beautiful, stylish site is, then by all means rebuild it.

–To deliver maximum benefits your website has to be both people and search engine friendly. Will rebuilding accomplish this?

–Some owners think they'll rebuild the site first and then perform SEO, only to discover afterwards that their budgets won't allow for it. Ask yourself, do I want to be stuck with a nice looking site that delivers NO more traffic than its predecessor?

–Your website should be an asset, not an expense. It should be generating you income or leads, or

providing useful information about your company. If it isn't then why have it?

–In the US, 13% of traffic to a website comes from search engines, up from 8% for the previous year.

International figures were even more striking with some countries having search engine referral rates as high as 21%! (WebSideStory, Mar. 2003). SEO makes your site search engine friendly. Rebuilding it may or may not, depending on how skilled in SEO your webmaster is. There's far, far more to SEO than just inserting META tags (title, description, keyword tag).

SEO first, rebuild second

It really is a much wiser choice to perform SEO first. Later if the results indicate the need to make improvements, then proceed with rebuilding your website. Involve your SEO in the rebuilding process – their input/ advice will be invaluable!

Chris Genge is the President of 1st on the List Promotion Inc, a website promotion firm that specializes in search engine optimization and pay per click management. Chris writes on current and emerging search engine marketing theories and has been involved in the SEO industry since 1997. He and his team focus on researching and implementing the most effective search engine optimization techniques. To learn at <http://www.1stonthelist.ca/>

SEO – Search Engine Optimization You Can Do

By J. Ratliff

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We all know what SEO is, and it seems like it has kind of an "executive" sound to it doesn't it? The

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truth is, thousands of webmasters spend millions of dollars every year on SEO services. Now, I am not discounting the importance of these services.

Indeed, SEO is very important not only to the big website portals, but to your website as well.

However, I do believe that a lot of the people who spend thousands annually, do so without needing to. I have done SEO work on a dozen websites for businesses, and about 20 of my own. My secret? It's all in the software.

If you have not checked out this software, I highly recommend it.

(IBP) for

short. I use it everyday, not only for my websites, but also for any SEO work I do.

It does cost around \$200, but it is worth every penny plus some.

Save money and do your own SEO work.

J. Ratliff is a webmaster, part time SEO guru, and affiliate guru. He has achieved certified SEO status from ExpertExam.



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