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**The Basics of Search Engine Optimization (S.E.O.)**

**By Jeff McIntire-Strasburg, Ph.D.**

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One means of making sure your site receives maximum visibility is search engine optimization (S.E.O.). You must think in terms of search engine optimization from the earliest stages of planning and design if you want to receive heavy traffic from the major search engines. In order to optimize your site, you need to understand how search engines work, how web surfers search, and what elements of your site contribute to successful search placement. While much information (and misinformation) exists about search engine optimization, experts agree that the elements you must focus on are keywords, meta tags and links from other sites.

**How Search Engines Work**

Before delving into specific elements, it's necessary to understand how search engines work. True search engines (as opposed to directories like Yahoo!) use a program called a "robot" or "spider" to "crawl" the web while gathering and indexing the information they find. A searcher receives the results of these crawls when s/he conducts a search. Sounds simple, right? Unfortunately, every search engine (and literally thousands of engines exist) has its own criteria for indexing sites, and further criteria for determining the ranking of sites. It's easy to see why S.E.O. consultants can make a handsome living - it's virtually impossible for a single webmaster to know all of the various rules that will optimize his/her site for every engine.

**Feeling Overwhelmed Yet?**

While a search engine optimization consultant can provide a greater amount of detailed knowledge for an individual web master, experts tend to agree that there are a few rules that almost anyone can apply to optimize his/her site.

First, while thousands of search engines exist, most surfers do their searching on a handful of sites. Yahoo! generally accounts for half of all web searches. While they charge a fee for simply considering a business listing in their directory (currently \$299), many business people may find that a reasonable investment, considering the popularity of this portal. Among true search engines, the most popular by

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far are Google and Overture. It's important to know that many search engines actually get their results from these giants, so applying the rules that work for these two can help get your site listed in many engines.

### Optimizing Your Site

In order to make sure your site is listed in searches that directly apply to your type of business, it's essential to use the best keywords and phrases. Keywords are the words that searchers use to find web sites that will give them the information they want. In order to take advantage of the power of keywords, you must find out what keywords and key phrases are most popular among the searchers you want to attract to your site, so you may want to consider using a service like Wordtracker (<http://www.wordtracker.com>) to find out the words and phrases that searchers are using. Once you've

determined this, you want to place those words and phrases at the points in your page most likely to be noticed by search engines. Experts tend to agree that the best places to use keywords are in your page title, your page's copy, and in the site's meta tags.

The page title is likely the most important place to use the proper keywords, as all search engine spiders tend to look at it. Precision is key - use the keywords that are most likely to bring the right visitors to that particular page. While some consultants suggest using many key words, or many slight variations of key words, or repeated key words, search engines have caught on to these strategies and may actually penalize your site for using such tactics. According to Webmonkey.com's Paul Boutin, it's best not to include extra words, such as a company name; using only the keywords as site title will generally bring the best results.

It's also important to use those keywords and phrases in the copy of the page, as spiders do look at this also. Note, for instance, how often I use phrases like "search engine optimization" and "search engine" in this article. That's deliberate. Keep in mind, though, that search engines have caught on to the practice of loading down copy with keywords to achieve higher rankings, and certain high ratios of keywords to overall copy may actually hurt your placement.

The third place to use keywords is in the site's meta tags, which are part of the coding for the page. Again, it's best to use only the words that will bring the best results - repetition or overuse of variations can hurt your optimization.

Finally, some consultants will suggest that regardless of your site's content, you always include the most popular overall keywords in your title and meta tags. While this may bring more initial traffic to your site, you have to consider whether attracting searches on "Eminem" or "Spiderman" will benefit you in any way. Generally, it's best to optimize your site so that you attract those searchers that would actually be interested in what you have to offer.

### Link popularity

Another criteria that many search engines use for ranking is link popularity. Essentially, is your site linked from other sites, and are those sites ranked well in their engines? This can be a time consuming

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process for a webmaster, as getting links on other pages generally involves contacting the owner of that page and asking for a listing or agreeing to a "link swap": you put a link on your page to their site, and they do the same for you. Again, don't believe that you can fool the search engines through short-cut methods such as FFA pages, as the engine administrators have caught on to these, also. Also keep in mind that links on other reputable pages account for a high percentage of traffic - you really can't lose by having your site listed on other site's "Links" pages.

### Some Final Thoughts

When optimizing your site for the search engines, it's also important to remember that a high ranking in a search doesn't necessarily mean more qualified traffic. As in many aspects of life, presentation is everything. If the listing on the search engine appears clear and professional, you're more likely to receive more of the traffic that will benefit you. Boutin notes that the meta name field in the coding is important in this regard, as some engines use the information in this field for their site description. While you want to use keywords and phrases in this field, do so in a manner that still will make sense to a surfer looking for a site like yours.

Ultimately, search engine optimization involves using tried and true methods of design and writing to make your site user-friendly.

More information:

Boutin, Paul. "Search Engine Optimization FREE"  
<http://hotwired.lycos.com/webmonkey/01/23/index1a.html>

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## **Search Engine Optimization For Traffic And Profits**

**By Chet Holcomb**

The point of this article is to help you to the next level and show you what search engine optimization has to offer.

Doing business on the internet is very competitive. You have to arm yourself with the know-how and the marketing tools to make your business a step above the rest. Each day, more and more websites are clambering to optimize their rankings in search engines and if you don't keep up, you may just be left behind in the abyss packed with so many failed websites.

Search Engine Optimization or SEO is a tool used nowadays by many websites. In the past and years to come, search engines have and will be the most used internet tool for people to find information they want.

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Most people that use search engines use only the top ten search results in the first page. Making it to the first page, more so to the top three is a gauge of a sites victory in search engine optimization. You will get a high ratio of probability in being clicked on when you rank high. The more traffic for your site, the more potential business which leads to profits.

In the beginning of this article, we went over the basics. Now, we will look at this topic a little more in-depth.

So just what is search engine optimization and do you have to use it? The answer to why you have to use it is a simple one. You need search engine optimization to be number one, or perhaps at best make your site generate profits.

With search engine optimization you have the advantage of generating a high traffic volume. Lets just say you get only a turning out of successful sales with 10 to 20 percent of your traffic. If you get a hundred hits or more a day, you get a good turning out of sales already. If you get only twenty to ten hits a day, you only get one or two if not any at all.

So once again, what is search engine optimization? search engine optimization is utilizing tools and methods in making your site the top position in the results of search engines. Acquiring a position in the first page and better yet in the top half of the page will guarantee that your business will produce awareness and subsequently stimulate more traffic, that could lead to possible earnings.

Search engine optimization requires a lot of work to be a total benefit. There are many aspects of your site you may have to change or add to, to benefit from search engine optimization. This will require researching information about the keyword phrases that are prevalent in regards to your sites theme.

You may also have to revise your sites contents so that you will get the right keyword phrases in place trying not to make it too commercial but light with good information. There are certain rules and guidelines to be followed with making your sites content applicable and favorable to search engine optimization.

You will also have to collaborate with many other sites so that you could get link exchanges . The more

inbound and outbound traffic generated by sites among others are one of the algorithms search engines uses to rank sites.

Search the internet for valuable help, tips, guidelines and methods for search engine optimization. Read many articles that can help you optimize your website in search engine results. The more education and information you gather the better. This will all help you in receiving those high rankings. This may require a little time and effort on your part but the payback will reward you.

If you can part with some money, there are many sites in the internet that can help you in search engine optimization. There are many sites that help in tracking keyword phrases that can help your website. There are also some content writers that have heaps of experience in making good keyword rich content for your sites that have good value.

Act now and see the payback you gain with search engine optimization. Search engine optimization will mean more traffic and business for your website leading to a sale.

The complexities of the subject matter within this article strive to give you a better look at what search engine optimization is all about.

Chet Holcomb of Internet Promotions Marketing Tools is a successful marketing expert providing advice for web marketers and webmasters on how to promote your website, or product using marketing tools that work. His numerous articles provide a wonderfully researched resource of interesting and relevant information.



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